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Perspective of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Towards Nation, Society, and Religion

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Abstract: ***The establishment of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is considered a significant event of the twentieth century. It initiated an ideological philosophy distinct from the various contemporary ideologies of the time. In doing so, it worked toward organizing Hindus not only across various religious sects prevalent in India but also at the social and national levels. It holds a distinct ideology regarding Indian society and culture. Its vision of a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation) cannot be viewed solely from a political, economic, and social perspective; it signifies an amalgam of Indian culture. The task of giving concrete form to this real cultural identity is undertaken by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Our social structure has been built upon our ancient cultural life values. In fact, it is the excellent sentiments of our culture that provide the right perspective for our national life. Ancient prejudices, blind faiths, and anti-social customs are often viewed as reactionary elements when revived. However, eternal and uplifting life values can never be viewed as reactionary. Labeling something as reactionary simply because it is ancient reveals nothing but intellectual bankruptcy. By the youthfulness of our culture, we mean that only by re-establishing ancient eternal values and ideals of life in our personal lives can we convey the message of generosity and human welfare to society, the nation, and the world.***

Keywords: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Society, Religion, Hindu, Muslim, Communal Harmony

Main Body

The social philosophy of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh can be correctly understood through the thoughts of its founder, Dr. Hedgewar. The primary goal of Dr. Hedgewar's social philosophy was the creation of an independent Hindu Nation and society. This did not mean that other sects had no place in the mainstream of the nation. The positive concept of social organization advanced by the Sangh included space for the Muslims and Christians of the country as well. In reality, the Sangh's social philosophy is a philosophy of love for society and service to society.

Dr. Hedgewar had a holistic perspective and advocated for unity within society. On issues like untouchability and caste discrimination, Dr. Hedgewar never adopted a compromising stance. He believed that "the spirit of equality cannot be imposed as part of discipline; it must flow voluntarily for it to be permanent." Similarly, in cultural philosophy, the Sangh assigns an important place to India's national values and national honor. For this reason, the ideal of the Sangh is Hindu culture, or the ancient culture of India. He believed that India was always a Hindu Nation, remains one today, and will remain a Hindu Nation through successive rebirths.

When the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh accepts India as a Hindu Nation, it does not imply that it speaks only of Hindus. Every person living in India, regardless of their religion, is accepted as a part of this Hindu culture. Various controversies have continuously arisen regarding this Hindu culture, primarily because Hindu culture could not be defined properly. In truth, it cannot be bound by any single, rigid definition.

While defining Hindu culture, Dr. Golwalkar attempted to explain it through an example: *"The entire curriculum of medical science developed to protect life, yet life itself cannot be defined precisely. Modern scientists have been unable to state what life is, but this does not raise any question about the utility of medical science. Similarly, our feelings, ideals, and aspirations have their own personal truth and are significantly useful in our lives, yet they cannot be expressed through a definition. Likewise, our Hindu culture has no single definition, but we cannot reject it on this basis, because its lasting impact is visible in all spheres of our lives."*

Our culture can be viewed as a peak of elevated perspective similar to the Himalayas, an aspiration that no other country in the world has yet managed to reach. The spirit of Indian culture expressed through *"Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti"* means that Truth is one, though scholars analyze it in many ways. Only through the revival of such high-grade cultural maturity and sublime characteristics can our society and every individual within it develop their life values and move forward in love for the nation beyond the veil of personal, familial, and other narrow considerations. No nation can progress if its society suffers from a petty mindset and looks down upon its own culture with contempt.

In Indian culture- which birthed ideal characters like Sita and Ram, where the greatest philosophers and sages of the past presented the pure essence of their lives, and where figures like Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (who command spontaneous respect worldwide in modern times) unfurled the flag of Indian culture across the globe- how should pseudo-disguised carriers of culture be viewed? In reality, rather than being carriers of Indian culture, they can be considered indicators of cultural decline.

Instead of Sita, Savitri, and Padmini, such figures have begun representing Indian culture. These revered women in the tradition of Indian culture are gradually being forgotten. In this regard, Guru Golwalkar states: *"We must keep ourselves away from such anomalies. We must keep the eternal and life-*

giving core elements of our culture under our control, preserving and developing them. Indian society never supports ostentation. For example, a husband and wife never display their love publicly. In contrast, in Western culture, love is displayed in a dramatic manner. Our culture teaches us that maintaining restraint over emotions is far more powerful and charming than unrestrained displays."

Efforts are being made on a large scale to re-establish India's Hindu culture at the present time, not only within the nation but also at the international level. Highlighting this context, the Sangh's *Sarsanghchalak*, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, states: *"There can be no greater insult to culture than accepting foreign elements and adopting foreign behaviors in modern life, and this blind imitation leads toward spiritual dependence."*

A review of the history of many nations around the world reveals that the security of culture and society is harmed more by internal opposing elements than by external aggressors. In the Indian context, Golwalkar wrote in his book *Bunch of Thoughts* that Indian society and culture are fundamentally facing three types of threats: Christians, Islam, and Communists. Among these, Christians and Islam represent a religious threat, whereas Communists pose a political threat. The religious ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is fundamentally an acceptance of Indian culture. Regarding the various religious sects living in India, its perspective on Muslims can be highlighted as follows: When Islam arrived in India, its primary objective was to convert this entire nation from *Dar al-Harb* to *Dar al-Islam*. State power remained in their hands for centuries, yet their ambition could not be fully realized. The reason for this can be attributed to the vital spirit of Hindu society, which repeatedly awakened in the form of great, valiant individuals, ultimately leading to the decline of Islamic rule in India. Although their ambition could not be fulfilled due to the fall of Islamic rule, their desire to retain influence was not extinguished.

Speaking about Muslims, Guru Golwalkar references Muhammad Ali Jinnah's dream, writing: *"In the image of Pakistan that Jinnah envisioned, Kashmir and Assam were also included. However, in the Pakistan created after partition, these territories were not included."* Analyzing the political sentiment of the newly created Pakistan in 1947, Golwalkar wrote: *"The regions of Punjab, Bengal, Sindh, and the North-West Frontier Province that went to Pakistan gave no importance to the Muslim League in the 1937 elections. Later, due to wrong policies, they had to go in favor of the Muslim League. In the voting for the creation of Pakistan, if the Frontier Province is excluded, crores of Muslims remaining in India voted in favor of partition. Did all the Muslims who stayed back in India instead of going to Pakistan after its creation become patriots?"* This question is put before the general public by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The Sangh believes that after the creation of Pakistan, the threat to Indian culture increased manifold. Even today, a large number of pro-Pakistan individuals reside in India and work to transmit classified information to Pakistan.

Regarding Indian Muslims, Dr. Saifuddin Jilani, who was originally Iranian, settled in the eastern part of India. On January 30, 1972, he met Golwalkar in Kolkata. During the discussion, he sought to know the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's perspective on Muslims. At that time, Golwalkar said: *"We must always keep in mind that the ancestors of all of us were the same, and we are all their descendants. Everyone should follow their respective faith with authenticity, but on the question of the nation, everyone's view must be one. Demanding special concessions on the basis of religion is wrong. Similarly, as Hindus, we also have no right to demand special privileges. Likewise, if some people demand a separate region, their demand cannot be considered appropriate, and such a move should be opposed by every Indian."*

Similarly, this question does not apply only to religions; it applies within Hindu society as well. Jains and Scheduled Castes are also included within Hindu society. Among the Scheduled Castes, some people became followers of Dr. Ambedkar, accepted Buddhism, and began considering themselves distinct from Hindus, whereas Mahatma Buddha himself was part of Hindu religion. In India, certain minorities were granted specific political facilities through the Constitution. Because of this, every group attempts to declare itself a minority, causing deep harm to the unity and integrity of the country.

Presenting the Sangh's views on the situation of communal tension in India after independence, Golwalkar states that even after thirty years of independence, communal tension persists in India. The main reason for tension between Hindus and Muslims that emerges is that Muslims living in India have not yet fully identified with Indianness and Indian culture. When Indian Muslims begin to feel that India is their own country and that every person living in this country is their brother, this problem will be completely resolved. Such a significant transformation is possible only when a change is brought about in their core mindsets.

Who holds the primary responsibility for bringing about this kind of change among Muslims? Answering this, Golwalkar says that politicians and religious leaders should stay away from such issues. Only the enlightened class, which is completely detached from political motives, is capable of carrying out such work with complete dedication and promptness. *"The problem with religious leaders is that their mindset is narrow."*

Thus, this analysis clarifies that since its inception, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has demonstrated a noble attitude toward Indian society and the nation. It accepts the various religions living in India as integral parts of Indian culture. The kind of social structure required under post-independence conditions could not materialize. The sentiment of religious bitterness is fundamentally seen due to erroneous interpretations of Indian culture and society. The work of dismantling this erroneous concept has been continuously undertaken by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The solutions to the distortions arising in Indian society need to be found from within this society itself—the Sangh works with this thought as its inspiration.

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