

# *Social Education through Religious Establishment*

AUTHOR

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On Independence Day in 1947 the question of building a new India came to the fore. Changes had to be brought about in two important areas, one being the physical condition of people and the other their way of thinking, each intimately connected with the other. In the ancient times too, each of the two areas had been looked after by independent establishments mutually co-operating for the common good to establish and sustain a stable social order. One of these, the state had always looked after social peace and order, prosperity of its subjects, their education and health. The other was the religious establishment which kept a vigilant eye on the inner development of its people to ensure that appropriate social ideals were established and the degrading social and individual trends were kept in check. Cleansing and reforming both these instruments, the state as well as the religious establishment, were clearly recognized by the founder of the Yug Nirman Yojna on Independence Day as the prime need of the hour.

It must be borne in mind that the state has always managed to attract capable and enthusiastic people to its service. It is the religious establishment which has been starved of talents, leaving the entire field of social and individual growth in the hands of charlatans and inferior people. This was indeed a matter of grave concern as the dark ages in India had conferred on her innumerable social evils, outmoded customs and beliefs on which flourished an astonishing variety of vested interests.

On top of this, gifts of science such as skepticism, spirit of enquiry and objectivity and utilitarian concepts struck at the very roots of social and religious ideals of the past. If survival of the fittest was the new slogan, there was no place for cooperation and social polity, individual code of conduct and religion.

Under these conditions it became well nigh impossible for the religious establishment to fulfill its declared objectives. The human dilemma is that if

individual ethics and social polity do not exist then how the animal in the man would be checked and controlled? How would his brute energy be diverted into socially and individually constructive channels? Material prosperity alone cannot ensure human happiness. No matter how much well-being and prosperity the welfare state may shower on its people, it is bound to be used for destructive ends unless the animal in man is kept in check. In fact, an alliance between egocentricity and lust for prosperity can generate such a powerful destructive social force that the very existence of society can be jeopardized.

The main area of operation of Yug Nirman Yojna, the epoch-making mission has been the villages of India and her illiterate masses. Nearly three fourths of India's population resides in villages and about the same number are illiterate. There are a number of organizations and periodicals in the urban areas which are working for social uplift of the down-trodden. The numerous speakers, preachers and politicians with their conferences, seminars, public meetings, and mass media like radio and television are all confined to the urban areas or thereabouts. In sharp contrast, large parts of rural India and the illiterate masses residing there have almost been completely left out of these efforts. Pragya Abhiyan has in fact shouldered the responsibility of imparting social education to these illiterate masses through a reformed and reorganized religious establishment with all the resources and man-power at its command.

Another reason for resorting to religious establishment as an instrument of social change in India was the innate religiousness of its people who have over the ages developed traditions and customs having the sanction of religion. Subjects like politics, economics, social sciences and philosophy are for the highly educated, but it would be impossible to convey their importance to the illiterate masses. If majority of the people are to be moved and set on the path of progress in keeping with modern times and if they are to be purged of the unwanted and outworn elements in their customs and traditions, then perhaps a religious

establishment with roots in the Vedic past and suitably geared for modern needs could alone become an effective vehicle for their social education and uplift.

The problems of our country spring primarily from our social backwardness which in turn gives rise to poverty and economic backwardness. It is well known how much we lose due to social evils. Nearly one third of the precious savings of an average house hold are wasted on marriages, feasts for the dead and other such wasteful customs, compelling them to forgo expenses necessary for welfare and progress of the family and further forcing them to lead a life of want and destitution.

Caste and class prejudices and differences have retarded the progress of large segments of our society. Nearly half of the total population comprising of girls and women is still languishing in purdah while those who have succeeded in breaking these shackles find themselves at a great disadvantage for lack of facilities and suitable training, and only a few are able to contribute effectively in bringing up the family on proper lines. Similarly, a large population consisting of different tribes is still outside the main-stream of development. The lot of middle level Harijans has, no doubt, improved considerably but the condition of untouchables and sweepers at the lowest rung of society is far from satisfactory. These prejudices of class, caste and sex are operating far more viciously in the rural areas than in the towns and cities. These socially backward groups suffer countless handicaps both emotionally as well as materially and in the long run retard the progress of the entire nation. Without ensuring social justice and without resolving these social issues progress achieved politically and in the sphere of economic development cannot be stable.

Social evils and strange beliefs have also taken their toll. Over six million able bodied people have adopted begging under the garb of religion. Many of these persons, living in style and luxury, go to any lengths to dupe the people and exploit their innate religiousness provoking or forcing them to part with

their hard-earned income and leisure on fake and sham religious rituals.

How should all these problems be resolved and how should harmful customs and traditions be uprooted? There appears to be only one way out. A reorganized and reformed religious establishment alone seems to be capable of freeing the masses from their mental shackles and outmoded customs. Further still, with its help the innate religiousness of the people can be mobilized and channelized into socially constructive directions. We would, thus, not only be saving the hard earned money of the people and sparing them a lot of vexation, but would also be setting them on the path of individual and social progress.

In addition to the removal of social evils mentioned earlier, there are many other measures to be taken up. Unsanitary living conditions and craze for intoxication are two widely prevalent evils. Inertia and lethargy have rendered a large number of people inactive and poor. We still hear of child marriages and unequal marriages on a fairly widespread scale and crime figures are rising. There is an urgent need to arouse the spirit of co-operation and good-neighborliness and to rectify the ills mentioned above.

These are clearly responsibilities of the religious establishment and it should now come forward and shoulder them. The state cannot bring about fundamental changes in the thinking processes of the masses and neither should the responsibilities of the religious establishment be passed on to the state.

This, in short is the concept of social education through religious establishment which is being carried out in the shape of Pragya Abhiyan since the last thirty-seven years on systematic lines throughout the country. It is now proposed to step up and intensify these efforts and make them more broad-based.

In spite of its degenerate and disorganized condition, the religious establishment in India still wields tremendous resources, man-power and

influence. Over six million people are making a living in the name of religion, and are so recorded in the census registers. About the same number devote their time and resources on religious things, making a total of nearly 12 to 15 million people who are connected with the existing religious establishment. There are over a lakh temples and monasteries on which hundreds or crores of rupees have been invested, and which receive hundreds of crores of rupees annually as offerings and donations. Pilgrimages alone claim an expenditure of hundreds of crores of rupees annually which does not include minor individual customary religious expenses incurred on such a wide scale.

It is true that the resources and man-power at the command of the state cannot be compared with those at the disposal of the religious establishment, but each has tremendous potentialities in its respective area to carry forward the welfare of the people and build a healthy nation. The latter may well appear disorganized, neglected and weak in our country but it still wields tremendous power and influence. With much less resources, the well organized Christian missions have extended and established Christianity throughout the world. The Christian religion which is only 2000 years old, has during this period succeeded in converting or bringing under its influence nearly two thirds of the world population. With many more times man-power and resources, the religious establishment in India has not even succeeded in changing the thought processes of its own people.

Thirty-seven years ago it was felt that in order to shake off the past prejudices and unhealthy practices bearing the sanction of religion and in order to forge ahead on modern lines, the religious establishment would have to be reformed, reorganized and rejuvenated to make it an effective instrument of social change. It is precisely these efforts which took the shape of Yug Nirman Yojna as a small beginning in 1947, but its achievements today stand out as beacon light to the people. Efforts were also made to persuade and beseech the

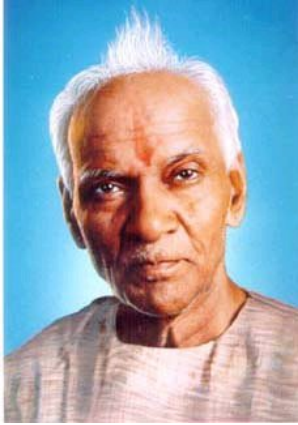
religious leaders, the saints and the Swamis roaming all over the country and abroad to divert their efforts in the direction of social education of the masses. But when repeated efforts yielded no results, the only way out was to forge ahead and set up a new and progressive broad-based religious organization.

It must be remembered that the state should continue to shoulder the responsibilities of people's physical welfare, prosperity and security. Religion, on the other hand, influences and holds sway over the hearts of people, their emotions, aspirations, beliefs and thinking. Development and growth of the inner life of the people is clearly the concern of religion. Social polity, code of conduct, self-restraint and public charity are areas on which the religious establishment must keep a vigilant eye, for their absence or perversion could lead to utter chaos and disruption of the social order. Not for nothing have the sages of yore laid such emphasis on true observance and practice of religion in our daily lives.

The need of the hour is to carry the true message of religion in its pristine purity to the people from house to house and man to man, using its power to drive away their mental sloth and backwardness, and to generate a will in them to achieve their best potential. The reverence which people have for religion can very easily be mobilized in such constructive channels. Pragya Abhiyan is in fact, dedicating its entire efforts to establish the primacy of religion as a means of educating the masses, to rouse them to go in the direction of social change and reconstruction.

## About the Author:

**Shriram Sharma Acharya:** A seer-sage and a visionary of the New Golden Era.



His personality was a harmonious blend of a saint, spiritual scientist, yogi, philosopher, psychologist, writer, reformer, freedom fighter, researcher, eminent scholar and visionary. He pioneered the revival of spirituality and creative integration of the modern and ancient sciences and religion relevant in the challenging circumstances of the present times. In 1979, he founded the Brahmavarchas Research Institute, the research center in Haridwar (India) dedicated to the integration of the modern and ancient sciences in a practical way motivated by the noble goal of health and happiness for all. This center houses well equipped laboratories of Haemetology, Biochemistry, Neurophysiology, Cardiology, Phytochemistry, Psychometry, Yagyopathy etc.

At the age of 15, (Jan 18<sup>th</sup>, 1926) a great Himalayan yogi, Swami Sarveshvaranandji appeared before him in astral body from the flame of the Dipaka (lamp) and guided him throughout his entire life. The next 24 years of his life were devoted to 24 Mahapurashcharanas –each consisting of the rhythmic recitation (japa) of 2.4 million Gayatri Mantra with strictest of disciplines. In 1943, he married Bhagwati Devi, and ever since, the saintly couple dedicatedly pursued the noble mission of spiritual upliftment of humankind.

Realizing the potential of inspiring literature and its relevance in the present era of intellectual evolution, he had chosen writing as the principal mode towards uprooting the evil tendencies and blind faith from people's minds and arousing the indwelling wisdom, strength and spiritual bliss. He wrote about 3000 enlightening books in Hindi on almost all topics concerning human life. He translated the entire Vedic Vangmaya (4 Vedas, 108 Upanishads, 18 Puranas etc.) in Hindi elucidating the tradition, style, universality and history of Vedic Literature. He also practiced higher-level Sadhana on the arduous heights of the Himalayas and established enliven contact with the Rishis of the Himalayas. During 1984-1986, he carried out the unique spiritual experiment of Sukshmikarana, meaning sublimation of vital force and physical, mental and spiritual energies. He authored a special set of 20 books highlighting the future of the world and conveying the message of the dawn of the New Era of Truth during the 21st Century. On 2nd June 1990, he voluntarily shed his physical sheath.

For more information:

To find out more about Shriram Sharma Acharya and his spiritual establishment visit [www.awgp.org](http://www.awgp.org)

Dev Sanskriti Viswa Vidyalaya is a university envisioned by Shriram Sharma Acharya to meet the pressing need to impart global education on scientific spirituality and life style with new thought of ethical, moral and spiritual transformation. Visit [www.dsvv.org](http://www.dsvv.org) for more information.

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