
Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar And His Thoughts On Social Harmony

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Abstract: India has been a hub of many well-known political thinkers who have contributed immensely to different realms of Social Sciences. India has had a diverse array of thinkers, from Swami Vivekananda to Mahatma Gandhi, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay and many more, who have not only presented their views on several political-social-economic problems and situations, but also tried to present effective solutions for the same through their respective ideologies. The ideas and views of these personalities still serve as a guide and help in devising roadmaps to the future not only for India but for the entire international community. The ideologies of these great men have not only been useful and relevant in their time period, but they are thinkers still seem to be relevant in the modern era as they were during that period. The philosophy of these personalities have provided solutions to many problems and issues of the society, also gave rise to many significant changes in the social, political, and cultural areas that the world has witnessed. Thinkers and social reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Periyar, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar have indeed left an indelible mark on the Indian people and social structure.

Keywords: Gandhi, Ideologies, Social Harmony, Golwalkar's theory

INTRODUCTION

India has had a diverse array of thinkers, from Swami Vivekananda to Mahatma Gandhi, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay and many more, who have not only presented their views on several political-social-economic problems and situations, but also tried to present effective solutions for the same through their respective ideologies. The ideas and views of these personalities still serve as a guide and help in devising roadmaps to the future not only for India but for the entire international community.. Of the many ideas and principles propounded by him, Golwalkar's theory of social harmony is of paramount importance as in the diversified societal structure of India, it helps in maintaining social harmony while promoting mutual collaboration and peace. During his tenure of more than three decades as the *Sarsanghchalak* of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Golwalkar talked extensively about national thinking and social harmony. The ideas made up the core of his innumerable speeches and talks. The views expressed by him are still as useful as they were in contemporary society. However, it is necessary to understand the meaning of social harmony before trying to understand the ideology of social harmony as propounded by Golwalkar or *Guruji* as he was fondly addressed by his students, fellow colleagues and friends.

In a diversified society like that of India, the term 'harmony' plays a critical role. As and when harmony is disrupted or challenged, the society faces multiple political, social and economic challenges. In the 1970s, the term 'harmony' was used as a principle in the ideological field for the first time. The credit for making the term 'harmony' a prestigious term at the ideological level goes to Dattopant Thengadi, who founded the Forum of Social Harmony in Pune in 1973. He believed that 'harmony' is not just a simple term; it is a much bigger and a widespread concept.¹

In fact, the Constitution of India has also accepted the principles of social economic and political justice. The Indian constitution provides the right to equal opportunity, social, political and economic justice for all citizens and national unity and integrity.

While describing his views on 'harmony', famous writer Ramesh Patange has mentioned, "The term 'harmony' reflects several meanings. One of its meanings refers to bring about social as well as religious harmony in the underprivileged section of the society. Accepting them as an integral part of the society would increase their faith and confidence in the system. And trust or faith is the first step towards harmony."²

The first paragraph of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 carries forward the same description and meaning, "All human beings are free from birth and have equal dignity and rights and should treat each other with a feeling of brotherhood. In present times, the main objective of our constitution was to include the Right to Equality and to abolish untouchability which is given in Articles 15 and 17 of the Constitution."³

Although the Constitution of India and international institutions such as the UN have always stressed on the significance of social harmony and equality among all, we find the complexities of the prevailing caste system playing a critical role in the Indian social structure. The rigid caste differences within the Indian society resulted in social inequality. The caste differences have been so strong that they gave rise to other social ill practices such as untouchability. This became a big reason indeed to divide the society in India. This also created a social structure where few castes faced the brunt of inequality and, hence, could not develop socially and economically, remaining underprivileged for ages. On the whole, this deprived and the underprivileged class remained economically and socially backward and weak. Thus, to bring the socially backward classes in the mainstream society, it is necessary to eradicate this social, economic and educational backwardness and sense of inequality to generate a sentiment of equality and harmony in Indian society. Besides this, the upper caste people need to make a lot of effort to accept the backward castes so that there can prevail social harmony in society.⁴

The accreditation of social harmony creates a casteless society. In other words, if one wants to bring about equality in society, then it is essential that there should be social harmony. Social harmony is the most important tool to establish brotherhood and a feeling of equality among all members of a society, irrespective of their castes. In the absence of social harmony, class differences and disunity prevail in society, which prove detrimental to the progress of a nation. It is evident that the path of social harmony, though not easy as it requires changing the mindsets and the thought process of society, is not impossible.

Golwalkar was deeply critical of the social disparity and feeling of superiority arising out of caste and birth. He said that, based on birth and caste, social disparity and disharmony prevailing in society is against religion and is a matter of criticism as it is against Vedic literature. He provides an example from *Rigved, Mandal 5, Sookta 60, Mantra 50* that means no one is greater and no one is smaller. All should work collectively for collective progress.

“अज्योष्ठासो अकनिष्ठास एते।
संभ्रातरौ वावृधुः सौभगाय।।”

Golwalkar accepts that although historically, it is difficult to ascertain when the evil of caste discrimination that is the feeling of high birth and low birth, started in the country, the reality is that the practice is a stigma on the entire Hindu society of the country as it is fundamental to have human equality in a society. There is a violation of the principles; this evil has to be completely eradicated from the society.⁵

With regard to caste and untouchability, Golwalkar said that “It is a sentiment of the upper caste people of the society. Therefore, it would take a lot of effort on their part to eradicate this social evil.”⁶ He wanted untouchability to be completely eliminated not only legally but also socially and evidently. Golwalkar believed that a lot of hard work would have to be done, a lot of teaching would have to be done, and old beliefs would have to be changed into new ones. Forceful implementation would not be effective in eradicating caste discrimination as it would lead to social differences in the community.⁷

He recommended to the volunteers of the RSS that, “To bring our neglected brothers closer, we should not be artificial but be genuine in our efforts. They should not feel isolated and it would become difficult for the people in politics to lessen this feeling of discrimination. This would require a good understanding of the religion and a strong sense of serving the society.”⁸

Golwalkar was extremely sad to see the increasing caste-based discrimination in Indian society. Throughout his life, he made a strong effort to end it and to create social harmony in society. He made sincere efforts to promote equality in society and to instill a sense of equality among every person of the society. He believed that in order to restore harmony and to remove social disparity, it is also essential to provide basic amenities such as education, economic and material needs of our backward caste members. Golwalkar has further written that, “Now it is our duty that we go to the deprived brothers of our society, whom we have been neglecting since a long time and make a strong effort in raising the standard of living of these people. We should try to devise such plans by which their primary materialistic needs can be fulfilled. Along with this material advancement, we should have a feeling of brotherhood and unity in the society. To achieve this goal, we need to abolish the unjust social discrimination and openly accept the downtrodden in the mainstream society.”⁹

Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar clarified on many occasions that to establish a united Hindu society, the upper caste people should work towards achieving this objective, because it is due to this discrimination, there is disunity in the society. Regarding untouchability, Golwalkar said that “this social evil should be abolished.” He divided untouchability into three parts, the first was the upper caste society, which considers untouchables as untouchable, the second division is that part of the society, which is the victim of untouchability and regards itself as untouchable. Third division of the society comprises the acharyas and religious gurus who provide a religious affirmation to this rigid caste discrimination. Golwalkar advised all the three divisions to work towards eradicating the problem of untouchability from the society and bringing social harmony in the society. He believed that “Untouchability is created by the upper caste people”.¹⁰ Golwalkar believed that the rise of the Dalit class and their degradation were due to the absence of education. Lack of education deprived them of the ability to use the resources of the society for their betterment. They remained engaged in their traditional caste

system and as a result remained poverty-stricken and backward. Thus, they were not given the respect that they enjoyed in the past. Golwalkar said that, "Ramchandraj also had four divisions or *varnas* in the society of that period and the fifth was Nishadraj, who represented the forest dwellers. These five divisions have been mentioned in the texts, in this way, the lower caste has also been accorded due respect, but in the middle ages, this system broke down and disintegrated."¹¹

Golwalkar believed that if the distinction between untouchability and touchability is removed from the society, then there can be complete development of the backward caste people. He believed that for the development of society, we should consider all brothers as Hindus and treat each other as equal. We should serve each other and work for the betterment of society. Golwalkar further stated that "our objective should not be just to ensure economic and political harmony but to bring about a general change and social harmony in the society. And if you pretend to achieve the goal of equality, it would not result in eradicated caste discrimination; rather it requires a lot of hard work on spiritual, moral and political levels to establish harmony and unity in the society."¹²

Golwalkar believed that the disparity present in the society due to caste system have increased so much that it is not possible to improve them. He was in consent with the views of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar that in the present time, there are only flaws left in the caste system, so it has to be completely eliminated from the society. Just as it would be appropriate to build a new house, by destroying the old one, similarly, the present caste system in the country would have to be replaced and a new society would be formed in its place which would be full of nationalism.¹³

Golwalkar also believed that the condition of the backward castes can be improved by their political and economic development and by considering them as equal. He accepted that it would be a strenuous task that cannot be accomplished merely by according them equal status in the constitution because equality cannot be established in the society without removing the sense of alienation from their mind.¹⁴

The meaning of 'harmony' is to unify society and eliminate mutual discrimination. Social harmony is not the responsibility of any one individual or organization; rather it requires concerted effort from every member of society. To achieve social harmony, there is a need to inculcate a sense of love and belonging in people of backward caste. Golwalkar made an effort to end caste-based divisions existing in the society and the evil of untouchability, and to establish complete social harmony in society.

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