Part-3

SYNTHESIS OF MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN LIFE
Lord Swaminarayan was neither a sentimentalist nor a doctrinaire, neither an altogether out of the world ascetic. He in fact, had deep visionary insight into the innate nature and character of the human beings. He was the most practical and active psychologist of the human nature. He was a reformer, who transformed the root basis of the culture for the best. He was a perfectionist. He has covered aspects like hygiene, moral character, economic well-being, social etiquettes and spiritual betterment thoroughly.

In this revolutionary work He presented the Śikṣāpatrī as a weapon against the evils of Kaliyuga. That is the reason why in Śikṣāpatrī one finds synthesis of moral, social and cultural aspects of human life.

MEANING OF VALUE

From the onset, humans have acquired the habit of staying in groups. These groups form society. Sociability is the very nature of man. Human beings form groups depending upon the class, creed, colour and culture. The whole form of cultural development synchronizes to form a civilization. Civilization has a set form of tradition, customs and tenets. As the proverb says, ‘The birds of same feathers flock together’, likewise, human beings with the same interest and temperamental qualities form civilization. As civilization has its distinguished features, likewise, it has its merits and demerits. Living together needs certain norms or set of rules. These rules or laws are known as values or social ethics. These values were, are and will be important for social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.
Faster the cultivation of social, cultural and moral values in the civilization, richer the civilization. Moral as well as social progress and growth of values go hand in hand.

In moral philosophy the term value has got many subjective connotations. Such as the aim of life, the realization of moral ideal, the intrinsic goodness and different types of values such as pragmatic, idealistic, realistic and utilitarian prevalent in society. Value is primarily regarded as prosperity and is believed to be synonymous with the index of prosperity. Prof. W. M. Urban holds that the apparent character of value is the orderly satisfaction of desires achieved by human beings.

Another aspect of value is anything that conserves or furthers life. Food, shelter etc. sustain and further our life and therefore they have value. But still this is not an adequate meaning of the term value. The activities of a human being are consciously or unconsciously directed towards certain moral aim in his life. This aim is implicitly or explicitly regarded as value. It is the value that disciplines and regulates our efforts and thus, moulds our activities. W. M. Urban rightly says, "That alone is ultimately and intrinsically valuable that leads to the development of selves or to self-realization. Man is a self, a spirit, a person with deep spiritual cravings; and self-realization must be comprehended in his concept of intrinsic values." ¹

The term 'value' seems to be ambiguous and is utilized for different moral activities by different moral philosophers. According to Kant nothing but the goodwill is an intrinsic value. He believed that happiness is intrinsically valuable only when it goes with goodwill. Whereas Sedgwick says that pleasure is the only thing that is intrinsically valuable. Beauty for others is intrinsically valuable. Some consider wisdom, love, truth, freedom, order and life as intrinsic values.
Intrinsic and instrumental Value

Categories of values are in accordance with different levels of its existence. As the life of a man is sum total of biological, mental, social, economical, ethical and spiritual aspects, the values related to each aspect also differs in its character. Mainly, values can be distinguished as instrumental and intrinsic. In philosophical analysis the term value stands for intrinsic as well as fundamental ‘essence’. For instance, the flower that is found in the garden has the natural fragrance and its beauty is supposed to be intrinsically beautiful. But if it is sold in the market, then its value becomes instrumental.

John Mackenzie rightly observes, “When we say that anything has intrinsic value, we do not simply mean that some being is pleased with it. The pleasantness is a sign or accompaniment or subjective aspect of the valuation. We mean by intrinsically valuable what appears such to a rational being calmly reflecting upon it. The intrinsically valuable may thus be defined as the direct object of rational choice.”

According to Wright, “An intrinsic value is of worth on its own account: an instrumental value, because of its consequence.” Intrinsic values are valuable and good in themselves. They are not the means but end in themselves.

Prof. Urban divides values in the three categories; physical, social and spiritual. For him, bodily and economic values are physical values whereas values of association and character are social values. Intellect, beauty and religion are considered as spiritual values. As far as priority among values is concerned, values related to the biological and economical life are subordinate to the intellectual, aesthetic and religious values. Everything that satisfies the needs of material life, just as food and nutrition, property,
money and so on have physical values. At primary level, one cannot ignore the physical values because in Indian tradition, body is known as an instrument for the liberation. A famous Indian poet Kālidas says, “śarīramādhyam khaludharmasādhanaṃ” which means that the body is an appropriate vehicle for religious pursuit. It indicates that physical values provide necessary background to moral and intellectual values but if compared to soul the value of body stands temporary, having secondary significance. Both health and wealth are instrumental to the intrinsic value of knowledge, character, beauty and goodness.

SOCIAL VALUES IN UPANISADAS

Vedic society was a society of seers, realized souls and therefore, satyam, r̤tam, jāna were emphasized as social values. There was an importance of togetherness in society and community. “sahanavabatu sahanaubhunaktu sahaviryamakārvāvahe” which means “Let us live together, think together, eat together”. Social harmony and good living were the ideals of social life. They lived for the welfare of the society. All this resulted into social progress.

Though asceticism is the dominant feature of Upaniṣadīc philosophy, social values are not overlooked in it. Cows and animals were protected. Sages and seers were living in a forest fearlessly. The sages of Upaniṣadas lived a normal domestic life with their wives and children. They dedicated their lives for the quest of spiritual reality, cherishing warm and loving relationship with their children and disciples.

The principle of Iśa Upaniṣada says, profound social humanism is needed for a moderate and active life. Love and non-hatred are the cardinal principles of human life as propounded by social humanism. Hate – the greatest social evil has been a root of all conflicts between individuals and
groups, society and community, nation and nation. Social relationship and social values can firmly stand only on the primary platform of spirituality.

The uniqueness of social relationships and social values of *Upaniṣadic* age lies in its spiritual dimension. People used to go to seers and sages for knowledge. Thus, spiritual unity is the cardinal principle of social existence.

The sages and saints like Vaśiṣṭha and Vālmiki used to come to Lord Lord Rāma for protection from the devils and demons. And Lord Rāma performed this as an offering unto his teachers. That is social value. There are teachings on how to live a useful social life in *Rāmāyan, Mahābhārata* and *Manusmṛti*. Following the same tradition of social value, Čandragupta accepted Jainism, Aśoka and Harṣavardhana accepted Buddhism.

People went to the hermitage for the development of character and value in order to protect the society. They became models of character development. Mahāvīra, Buddha, saints like Yājñavalkya as well as female characters like Śiśu, Śakuntalā and Urmilā are the ideals of such characters. Thus, in *Vedic* and *Upaniṣadic* age, there was an emphasis on moral and social values where women, civilization and culture were duly respected.

**SOCIAL VALUES IN ŚIKSĀPĀTRĪ**

In modern context, social values consist of cooperation, cordiality, compromise, affiliation, goodwill and justice. According to Prof. Urban, association and character are the two principles. Social values stand higher to bodily values in the hierarchy. One has to be open and broadminded to cultivate these values. Bodily values are limited to an individual whereas values of association and character affect large numbers of people. Association demands the sacrifice of selfish desires and motives. One has to abandon sense of ‘I’ and should live with the sense of ‘We’. *Lord*
Swaminarayan was a great promoter of celebration of festivals and congregation and thereby insisted his devotees to do so to foster togetherness and we-feeling. He says,

“My disciples of means shall perform ahimsak yajñas for propitiating Vishnu and should feed Brahmins and ascetics on the day observing ekādaśī fast or on religious days in the places of pilgrimage. My disciples of means shall celebrate the religious festivals in temples with great splendor and enthusiasm and shall give alms to the deserving Brahmins.”

He believes that celebration of festivals is the birthplace of social and cultural values. Festivals bring more interaction and bridge the gap among the people. Festivals are the moments when people get a chance to meet each other, eat together, talk together and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Thus, Lord’s intention is to instill the foundation of collective life and social harmony through festivals.

Social value is social development. The basis of social development is community and association. One should distinguish between association and institution. Just as religious institution has got a very high purpose and gives very noble values to its devotees and members, similarly, institution of family, marriage, welfare, state, university, hospital, scientific and technological institution provide the social value besides its educational purpose.

Śiksāpatrī gives importance to the social values for the development of family, society and the nation. What’s important is social wealth, yogya śāsan - anusāsan, the will of the people. It is stated as Gaṇa Rājya (democracy). There should be good progeny, good members of the society and good community. For this, Lord Swaminarayan shows an ideal of kinship between the ruler and the subjects. Lord Swaminarayan preaches to
establish the society where king should treat his subjects as his own children. Wherever such affectionate relationship flourishes, there is bound to be a social harmony, peace and progress.

As one of the basic institutions of society, though small, family offers lion’s share in the cultivation and preservation of social and cultural values. In Śīkṣāpatrī one finds a fair discussion on social values, pertaining to the householder devotees.

To maintain and promote mutual understanding and co-operation among family members, Śīkṣāpatrī emphasizes on values like respect, purity of relations, sacrifice, contentment, patience, fidelity, service to elders, forgiveness.

Hospitality is one of the most important values for a happy and successful family life. It has also been emphasized since Upaniṣadic age. In Indian tradition the guest is considered to be Godly and is given the most amicable treatment. The homage of Yama to Nachiketa, who waited for three days at the door of Yama is an evidence of Indian hospitality at the highest level. This ancient Indian tradition of hospitality has become a marked feature of Indian courtesy and culture. In Śīkṣāpatrī, Lord Swaminarayan significantly advocates the concept of hospitality. He says,

"According to their means My devotees shall entertain and serve guests with food." 

"My disciples shall serve their parents, preceptor and ailing persons till they live to the best of their ability." 

For the economically settled domestic life and to cope up with greater needs with scantly means, Lord Swaminarayan emphasizes on the values like sense of duty, contentment, accuracy in dealings of business transactions. These are the key values for householder to lead a happy, successful and
well-to-do life. To enhance a sound economical aspect in one’s life, the Lord in *Shikshapatri* prescribes that,

“*My householder disciples shall take up such vocation as may be suited to their varṇa and āśrama and according to their ability.*” 6

“*My disciples shall store food, grains according to their means, and save money for their future incidental requirements. Those who own cattle shall store the required fodder.*” 7

“*My disciples shall not enter into business transactions either for purchase of land or for lending money with even their sons or friends except by a written document.*” 8

“*My disciples shall enter into a written understanding with a witness attesting his signature thereto for the amount that may be required to be paid on marriages either of their own or of others, but should never rely on oral understanding only.*” 9

“*My disciples shall regulate their expenses according to their income and must never indulge in extravagant expenses, for, expenses incurred in excess of income invites misery.*” 10

“*My disciples shall keep legible and regular accounts of their income and expenditure written daily in their own handwriting.*” 11

Thus, *Lord Swaminarayan* inculcates various social and cultural values with a view to attaining the ideals like social integrity, cohesion, cordiality and harmony in family and society.

**Moral Values**

Moral values are also known as transcendental values because they transcend the limits of individual and they are realized in some form of spiritual activity. The three ideals of truth, beauty and goodness, satisfy the three aspects of spiritual activity in the self i.e. intellectual, emotional and
Moral and social value are interrelated and harmonized in unity and therefore, satisfy our whole spiritual nature. Moral value is unique and sui generis.

Religious and moral values are closely related to each other. “Religious value emphasizes love of God whereas moral value emphasizes love and service of humanity. God is the embodiment of moral perfection. Hence, moral value, in a sense, includes religious value. Love of goodness implies love of God and humanity.”

Moral value embraces and comprehends all the values. Moral goodness is open to everybody at all times. “It is true that out of all these values, moral value is said to be supreme value among other values because moral value is directly concerned with human action and becoming of the individual.” It doesn’t mean that lower values like physical and economical values are neglected.

The relative values presuppose the absolute value. As we go further in the hierarchy of value we come across higher spiritual values. “Truth, beauty, goodness and religious aspiration have got an intrinsic value. This is because their value cannot be reduced to any instrument.

Social values grow into ethical values. They imply ethical values and give them concrete moods in social conduct. Ethical values are also social in the context of their practice. Ethical values are virtues that are to be observed in social conduct.

In The Bhagavad Gītā Lord Krṣṇa glorifies the values as divine wealth. The Lord says,

“abhāyam sattva-saṁśuddhir jñāna-yoga-vyavasthitih
dānam damaś āyaṁ yajñaś ca svādhyayastapatā ārjavam.”
(Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in the yoga – of knowledge charity, control of the senses, performance of sacrifice, study of the śāstras, straightforwardness)

Lord Kṛṣṇa in *The Bhagavad Gītā* gives a vivid explanation between divine and demonical nature of human being. He clearly states, “The *deva* nature is distinguish by an acme of the *sāttwic* habits and qualities like self-control, sacrifice, the religious habit, cleanliness and purity, candour and straightforwardness, truth, calm and self-denial, compassion to all beings, modesty, gentleness, forgiveness, patience, steadfastness, a deep sweet and serious freedom from all restlessness, levity and inconsistency are its native attributes. The *āsurīc* qualities, wrath, greed, cunning, treachery, willful doing of injury to others, pride and arrogance and excessive self-esteem have no place in its composition.”

**MORAL VALUES IN UPANIŚADAS**

The ethical values that are prominently emphasized in *Upaniṣadas* are truth, penance, celibacy, moderation, faith, love and calmness. As texts of *Upaniṣadas* are thoroughly metaphysical and spiritual, values enhanced by them are also conducive to spirituality. The status of ultimate reality according to *Upaniṣadas* is transcendent as well as immanent. It transcends good and evil and remains unaffected by them, but on the other hand good is supported and sustained by ultimate reality. Good is the integral nature of reality therefore, its strict observance leads to the spiritual realization.

The good is also identified with truth. Our national motto ‘*satyamevājayate*’ derived from *Mundak Upaniṣada* is certainly a more comprehensive truth than intellectual truth. According to it, truth is deemed to be ultimately victorious. It is the truth of life and not merely the truth of thought and action.
In Indian philosophy, *Katha Upaniṣada* mentions an incident from Nachiketā’s life. Out of three boons of worldly riches offered to him by Lord Yama, he accepted nothing but the boon of immortality. Then after, Yama made distinction between *preyas* - pleasant and *śreyas* – the good. The dialogue between Yama and Nachiketā gives us the message to give priority to the values of *śreyas* over *preyas*. In other words, the physical values pertaining to bodily enjoyment and worldly pleasures are considered as inferior to the values of *mokṣa* pertaining to the bliss of the soul. Because *preyas* has momentary value whereas *śreyas* has eternal value. Human being should perceive only the good from the objects of the world. This insight will make him immortal. Thus, ethics of *Upaniṣadas* are anti-hedonistic as they prescribe moderation of sense gratification and to condemn pleasures.

Faith is one of the milestones of spiritual path. It is the great force that helps an individual to remain steady and unaffected against the hindrances of moral and spiritual path. It is also called *śraddhā* in *Upaniṣadas*. The purpose of faith is to intensify our own efforts in the direction of the discipline that leads us to our spiritual goal. The value of faith is overtly insisted in the *Praśna, Mundāk, Čāndogya and Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣadas*.

*Tapas* has been a dominant feature of the seekers of the truth in the *Upaniṣadas*. Penance is a positive spiritual discipline that consists in withdrawal of energy from being diffused in outer activities of life and concentrating the same for inner spiritual realization and utilizing the same for the social good.

The incident of Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī inspires us to seek the eternal happiness and ignore the values that are transitory in nature. Before going for the salvation, Yājñavalkya decided to leave all his possessions for
his wife but his wife Maitreyī too refused those riches by interrogating if she would gain eternal life from those possessions.

**Views of Great Thinkers and Philosophers on Moral Values**

Śankarācārya in his commentary on *Brahma-Sutra* and *Vivekacudāmani* emphatically states the four-fold discipline necessary for an aspirant in realizing *Brahman* and attaining of Self-knowledge. “They are:

1. *Nitya-anitya vastu viveka* – the discrimination between the Eternal and the transitory;
2. *Iha-amruta phalabhoga virāga* – non attachment towards the enjoyment of fruits of actions in this world or in heaven;
3. *Samadi-satka-sampatti* – the six moral virtues
   (a) *Sāma* – control of mind;
   (b) *Dama* – control of senses;
   (c) *Uparati* – withdrawal of the senses from worldly pursuits;
   (d) *Titikṣa* – fortitude under any adverse circumstances;
   (e) *Śraddhā* – conviction in the truth of the Scriptures regarding the transcendental Reality and unflinching faith in the words of a realized Guru;
   (f) *Samādhāna* – constant application of the mind towards the realization of the Reality.
4. *Mumukṣutva* – Intense desire to be free from all the worldly bondages and corporeality by realizing the bodiless, Infinite, Blissful Self and Its identity with *Brahma.*

Socrates, the great Greek philosopher was of the opinion that a concise perception of the values in their appropriate form helps one to inculcate moral values more effectively and live healthy and happy life.
Virtue is knowledge is the essence of Socrates' life. If a person fully understands the nature of good, he could not fail to pursue it. On the other hand, if a person did not fully understand the nature of good, he could not be moral except by accident. Knowledge is virtue, ignorance is vice to be temperate without knowledge is to be temperate by a kind of intemperance. To be courageous without knowledge is a kind of cowardice.

Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States of America (1861-1865) once wrote a letter to the head master of a school in which his son was studying. It is one of the best illustrations that reveal the moral values. He writes, “Teach him, if you can, that a dollar earned is of far more value than five found... Teach him to learn to lose and also to enjoy winning. Steer him away from envy, if you can.... In school, teach him it is far more honorable to fail than to cheat. Teach him listen to all... but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth and take only the good that comes through. Let him have the courage to be impatient... let him have the patience to be brave. Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself, because then he will always have sublime faith in mankind.”

In short, Abraham Lincoln wanted to imbibe the values like honesty, sportsman spirit, perseverance, discrimination, courage, patience and humanity in his son that would help him to be a perfect person and a successful student.

**MORAL VALUES IN ŚIKṢĀPATRĪ**

Śikṣāpatrī is the scripture of values. The three greatest values of Upaniṣadas namely satyam (truth), śivam (goodness) and sundaram (beauty) are in tune with the values promoted by Śikṣāpatrī. Lord Swaminarayan has beautifully focused on different aspects of social and moral values in it and has also given a practical vision about the priorities of values. Moral values
are the real ornaments that adorn the inner beauty of human life. Without these values, his endeavour is sure to lead him towards degeneration.

The moral values that are highlighted in Śikṣāpatrī are: discretion, non-violence, truth, charity, chastity, penance, moderation, self-restraint, faith, sevā (service) and many other. Social as well as ethical values incorporated in Śikṣāpatrī are based on love and spiritual harmony (Ātmīyātā). All these values foster humanism and spiritual aspiration that shapes the deeds and leads one towards liberation.

There are several values that play a major role in self-development of an individual but in Śikṣāpatrī, Lord Swaminarayan says that āhimsā and Brahmaçarya are such two intrinsic values that comprehend all other values. It is also said that the superior being evolves only by strict and absolute observance of āhimsā and Brahmaçarya. In fact, Hindu dharma has established and maintained the spiritual supremacy all over the world only because of these two key values.

ŚIKṢĀPATRĪ AND BRAHMAÇARYA FOR HOUSEHOLDERS

The core meaning of Brahmaçarya is – ācaryā or the course of conduct adopted in search of Brahma or truth. Brahmaçarya is not merely mechanical process but absolute control over all the senses and freedom from the bondage of lust at all the three levels i.e. word, deed and thought. It is the surest and the highest mean for self-realization or attainment of Brahma.

Brahmaçarya is also glorified in several Upaniṣada like Praśna, Mundaka, Čhāndogya and Brihadāranyaka Upaniṣadas as a cardinal form of self-restraint. Brahmaçarya is the reflection of discipline of tapas in conduct. Brahmaçarya has come to be identified with celibacy or with strict
restraint of sexual urge, as sex is the most impelling of the natural urges and sexual temptations happen to be the cause of many evils of life.

Hindu philosophy proclaims that that ‘Eka nārī sadā Brahmaçārī’ i.e. to be loyal to one’s wife is being a celibate. For His householder devotees, *Lord Swaminarayan* shows an ideal of ‘one-woman relationship’. In *Vačanāmrta*, *Lord Swaminarayan* states that,

> "Celibacy is also prescribed for the householder. He shall not commit adultery. He should not enjoy sex even with his wife on the day of religious fast. The renunciate as well as the householder will meet with distress to the extent that he violates the rules prescribed for him." 17

Not only Indian culture but the cultures around the world have never approved adultery. A person should be loyal to his/her spouse. Chastity is well maintained if this discipline is observed. But if this rule is violated his senses begin to wither and his strength declines. He/she no longer remains capable of striving for spirituality anymore. Therefore, *Lord Swaminarayan* sternly says,

> "None of my followers, male or female shall commit adultery." 18

Marriage is an institution based on mutual faith. One who commits adultery is doing injustice to his wife. Such an action on the part of any partner leads to the breach of trust. Doubt, agony, quarrels and restlessness sets in and finally it creates chasm between their relation and the marital life get scattered. It is also said in *Mahābhārata* that, “If one, being enslaved by greed, act according to his lust and anger, becomes degraded and tread the path of adharma, gets ruined with his brothers and relatives.” 19

The person who becomes blind with lust, loses his power of discrimination between good and bad. He becomes an animal in disguise.
“Manu specifically states that *Kāma* is not bad, it becomes bad only when man becomes madly attached to it. Mad attachment to *Kāma* is not ācara and it does not lead to dharma.”  

For the attainment of God, one’s heart should be free from lust. God never resides in one’s heart whose heart is vitiated with lust and sexual desires. Celibacy is the base of spirituality. It leads one to pure thoughts. If an individual desires for a woman other than his wife; he breaks his vow and becomes disqualified for spiritual aspiration. In order to conserve and concentrate one’s energy for the attainment of self-realization, one needs to be in a constant state of celibacy.

Christianity also gives warning against adultery, “Be faithful to your own wife and give your love to her alone.” Jesus further says, “Can you carry fire against you chest without burning your cloths? Can you walk on hot coals without burning your feet? It is just as dangerous to sleep with another man’s wife. Whoever does it, will suffer.”

*Lord Swaminarayan* has highlighted the standards of observing celibacy not only in personal life but also in public life.

“Our male householder disciples shall not under any circumstances touch widows who are not closely related to them. They shall not keep contact with a woman who has been associated with a king in any way.”

For the female devotees also, to observe the code of celibacy, *Lord Swaminarayan* has mentioned that,

“They shall not under any circumstances develop contact with any young, handsome and virtuous man.”

In Indian tradition, the code of celibacy is equally emphasized for the women folk. Such an act on the part of women is known as ‘*Pativrata*
The chaste women like Sītā, Urmilā, Anusuyā, Ahalyā, Sāvitrī stand out in the Indian history as the living illustrations of Pativrata Bhakti. One of the remarkable features of Indian woman is her utter submissiveness, devotion and fidelity. Carrying forward the same glorious tradition, Lord Swaminarayan says,

“The female follower shall serve their husbands; be they blind or ailing or impotent in the manner in which they worship and serve God; and under no circumstances shall they speak harshly to them.”

Thus, monogamy — a system of being faithful to one’s spouse is strongly advocated by Swaminarayan. Such mutual respect in the family life paves the way for the social harmony and creates an environment of dignity for every citizen of the nation.

ŚIKSĀPATRĪ AND BRAHMAČARYA FOR SĀDHU

One of the main reasons of Lord Swaminarayan’s manifestation was to uproot lust and ego underlying in the human psyche. He therefore founded a very firm pathway for his disciples to follow. Being visionary He could see beyond the frontiers of human conscience. So, He concluded that it is over acquaintance with a woman that leads a disciple to descend from the austere path of celibacy. Therefore, He advocates the ideal of eightfold Brahmaçarya for His disciples i.e. abstinence from sexual desire in thought, word, speech. Lord Swaminarayan says,

“The naisthik brahmaçāries who observe eightfold celibacy shall avoid contact with woman in any form; neither talk with females nor shall they intentionally look at them. They shall never indulge in talks related to woman nor listen to the same; neither shall they ever go for a bath in such places where females tend to pass by. They
shall never touch or look at the pictures of females nor their statues made of either wood or metal; except those of goddesses.”

Thus, Lord Swaminarayan has laid a strong foundation and preached his disciples to be absolutely watchful and avoid all the contacts, circumstances and scenes that stimulate his sexual desire and deviate him from spiritual path. Lord says,

“These Brahmaçārīes shall not draw pictures of females nor shall they touch garments worn by a woman nor look intentionally at animals in coition. They shall neither touch, speak nor look at a man in the dress of a female; neither shall they ever preach, talk or sing devotional songs directly to females.”

Value of Brahmaçarya is so dear to Lord Swaminarayan that He also permits His saints to hate the woman who tries to fascinate and degrade them. In such circumstance He says,

“They shall try to keep away from the woman who deliberately approaches them, by expostulating her or if necessary, by assaulting her, but under no circumstances allow her to draw closer. They shall never take meals from a Brahmins house if the meals are served by woman and not by male member. They shall never allow a female to step in their residence.”

By observing the eightfold Brahmacharya one can keep his mind pure, tranquil, devoid of passions and unchanging (nirvikāri). The same principle is also emphasized by Lord Kṛṣṇa in Bhagavad Gita. While narrating the characteristics of sthitaprajña Lord Krishna has emphasized on sanyam i.e. self-restraint.

Brahmaçarya is a divine word. It is stern and substance of yoga. Brahmaçarya is to the yogī what electricity is to an electric bulb. It revitalizes the mind and nerves. It helps to conserve physical and mental
energy. It boosts memory, will-force and brainpower. Without Brahmacarya, no spiritual progress is possible. The one who has perfect control over sexual energy, attains power unobtainable by any other means.

To quote Mahātmā Gāndhī, "Brahmacārī means searcher after God. One who observes brahmaçarya brings himself nearest to God in the least possible time. And all the great religions of the world, however much they may differ are absolutely one on this fundamental thing that no man or woman with an impure heart can possibly appear before the great White Throne." 29

"The observance of chastity in thought, word and deed increases willpower and conserves energy, which is in them transmuted in higher purpose. This stored up energy according to yoga, is called ojas. A chaste person can tap his intellectual and spiritual capacities to their fullest extent. Through the exercise of restraint and self-control he develops tremendous stamina and spiritual strength or ojas." 30

Thus, the practice of Brahmacarya is fourfold process, control of sex impulses, conservation of sex energy, keep a close check over the energy being deviated, divert the conserved energy into proper spiritual activities like japa, kirtana, selfless service, pranāyāma, study of scriptures, self-analysis, instrospection and vićāra. Thus, Brahmacarya is the process of channelizing of sex energy.

It is very difficult to practice Brahmacarya in absolute sense. It is easy to conquer tiger or a lion or an elephant. It is easy to play with cobra. It is easy to walk over the fire. It is easy to uproot the Himalayas. It is easy to get victory in the battlefield. But it is very difficult to eradicate lust. Therefore, Lord Swaminarayan expected his disciples to resolutely follow the code of celibacy as prescribed in Śiksāpatrī.
The five hundred paramhansas initiated by Lord Swaminarayan firmly followed the precepts of saintliness laid down in Śiksāpatrī. Their spiritual goal was to seek a union with Brahma and forge a devotional relationship with Parabrahma, the Supreme Godhead. They were firm in observing the code of renunciation of woman and wealth. In the spiritual band of sādhus, saints like Gopālānanda Swāmī, Muktānanda Swāmī, Brahmānanda Swāmī, Nityānanda Swāmī lived an exemplary life of eightfold celibacy which spread the fragrance of Lord Swaminarayan’s divinity.

ŚIKSĀPATRĪ AND NON-VIOLENCE

Ahimsā is one of the two principle values incorporated in Śiksāpatrī by Lord Swaminarayan. In fact, Indian spirituality firmly believes in the sublime truth that Brahma pervades not only in the living beings but also in the last atom of the universe. Thus, for any aspirant who seeks Brahma, ahimsā becomes the greatest dharma and himsā becomes the greatest adharma. Violence in physical or mental form has been abhorred all over the world in general and Hindu religion in particular. Therefore, Swāmī Vivekānanda has rightly quoted, “Each individual soul is a part and partial of that Universal soul, which is infinite. Therefore, in injuring his neighbour, the individual actually injures himself. This is the basic metaphysical truth underlying all ethical codes.”

Ahimsā means never paining any living creature either by words, deeds or thoughts. Non-injury implies high level of respect towards each and every creation of the cosmic existence. If one transgresses this eternal law, he shuns his connection with the whole existence.

If the different ethics lived upon by M. K. Gāndhī are to be summed up in one word, it would be none other but ‘Ahimsā’. Although Gāndhījī also
accepted satya or truth as the highest value, his name is generally identified
the world over with Ahimsā or non-violence.

All the religions the world over including Hinduism, Islam, Shikhism,
Christianity, Jainism, Biddhism and many others have accepted violence,
cruelty, untruth, anger and hatred as the greatest sins.

The concept of ahimsā encompasses the highest values of
compassion, friendliness, forgiveness and brotherhood. According to
Jainism ahimsā is considered to be the greatest virtue in its moral discipline.
According to Buddhism's Pancaśīlā (the five principles of correct actions),
the first and major principle is not to torture any living being i.e. non-
violence.

The Sufi saint of Islam MirDad has emphatically said that any one
who eats the flesh of any living being shall have to repay it with his own
flesh. The Gurubāni of Sikhism also believes in the principle of living a life
of swan that eats only pearls and not a life of crane that feeds on fish and
frogs. The same principle is also propagated by Jesus Christ. He says that
one who kills others is, in fact killing himself. Whoever eats flesh of an
animal after killing it, is actually eating his own flesh himself.

All these religions have stressed upon abjuring meat because of the
underlying principle of ahimsā. Scriptures of different religions all over the
world have taught us to see a reflection of heavenly father in every living
being and have considered non-violence as the best religion. Almost all the
religions ban flesh food and have prohibited the killing of any harmless and
innocent living being.

Lord Swaminarayan has distinctively accepted the principle of
Ahimsā in His philosophy. It forms the base of His very teachings.
According to Him it helps one to eradicate the violent instincts deeply rooted
in human temperaments and lead a life of spiritual harmony. In Śikṣāpatrī, He says,

“None of my follower shall ever kill any creature whatsoever; nor shall they intentionally kill even small insects such as lice, bugs, etc. None shall kill animals such as goats, deer, rabbits, fishes, etc. even for the purpose of performing sacrifices or for propitiating a deity; for non-violence in itself is declared by all the scriptures as the highest dharma.”

“None shall ever eat flesh, be it the remnant of offering in a sacrifice. None shall mutilate with a weapon or the like any part of his body or that of others as punishment for misdeeds committed either by oneself or by others in a state of excitement or in anger.”

Thus, Lord Swaminarayan has clearly emphasized the law of ahimsā. He strictly disapproves injuring or killing any creation in any form – word, deed or thought.

ŚIKṢĀPATRĪ – AN ICON OF PURITY

Human personality is endowed with ideal nature capable of realization. The self is a value to be satisfied, identified and realized in its multiple aspects. By developing various skills and qualities, one qualifies oneself for self-realization. Values demand harmony among them and this could be achieved through purity. Thus, purity is the passport to the land of bliss.

Purity Of Speech – A Form Of Non-Violence

Speech of a person is a unique godly gift to man that differentiates him from the other creatures. Its appropriate use leads one towards immeasurable heights, whereas its improper use pushes him into the vale of
mortification. Hence, one should be absolutely thoughtful in using his speech. It should be truthful, benign, humble and loving.

If one violates this golden rule of speech and starts giving awful statements and judgements for others, he is bound to injure the other fellows’ feeling and thereby injure the other fellows’ mind. Thus, the rule of non-violence is also to be observed at the level of speech. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā, too, proclaimed crookedness of speech as demonical wealth.

Jesus Christ also condemned the harmful faculty of judging others, he says, “Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you, for God will judge you in the same way as you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules, you apply to others. Why, then, do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, and pay no attention to the log in you own eye?... You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

“In the view of Mahātmā Gāndhī, the liberal meaning of the term non-violence is the absence of ‘mental’ intention of not injuring, harming, disturbing and agonizing the mind or body of the opponent of other party. He spoke quite often in his speeches to the effect that he hated the sin and not the sinner.”

Lord Swaminarayan did not constrict His ideas and philosophy of ahimsā merely to a physical level i.e. injury and killing but has stretched its relevance to practically all the facets of life i.e. deeds, words and thoughts.

According to Lord Swaminarayan speech is the true reflection of one’s soul. Any person is best judged by the veracity of his speech. Among all the penance that a seeker has to observe to elevate his soul and realize the God, Lord Swaminarayan considers the penance of speech as one of the
most important penance. In Śiksāpatrī He has emphasized on this aspect to demolish the prevalent evils in society.

It is rightly said that to expose oneself is one of the greatest diseases associated with human soul. In fact self-love and self-ego are very basic instinct that haunts the human being birth after birth. As a result of such inclination crookedness in speech is reflected in various forms.

The common examples of contaminated speech that we normally experience in our day-to-day life are criticizing, backbiting, maligning others, false accusations, worldly talks, act as a spy and agent. All these not only affect the social and mental harmony but also the soul of one who practices it. Thus, in view of Lord Swaminarayan all these are the violence of speech.

Lord Swaminarayan further explains that only egocentric, profligate and directionless people indulge in such activities. Moreover, it also creates the worst impression on one’s mind and contaminates his citta. Besides all these negative tendencies satiate our nature and instincts like ego, stubbornness and jealousy. Ultimately, as one gets demonical joy, he gradually becomes habituated and finally addicted by such evil practices. Thus, to practice the non-violence that is the purity of speech and to be free from all these vices, Lord Swaminarayan in Śiksāpatrī says,

“Do not expose the secrets, faults of others.”

“None shall ever level false accusation against any one for the purpose of promoting self-interest nor shall he ever abuse any one”

“None shall ever vilify God’s places of pilgrimage, Brahmins, chaste woman, saints and Vedas nor shall he listen to such talks.”

“None shall ever utter truth which may cause one’s own treachery or others.”
"None shall ever listen to or give credence to scriptures skillfully contrived to deny the existence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His incarnations."

"None of my saints neither indulge in worldly talks nor hear them deliberately. They shall not act as agents or spies and not shall they indulge in backbiting or act as false witness." 36

Through these precepts the inter-personal relations in social life are regulated. These ethical codes of conduct can liberate the masses from ignorance, false ideas, undue habits and unwanted actions. It also helps to overcome the basic instincts of self-love and self-ego and thus, establishes peace, order and equipoise in the character of individual, society and the nation.

As Swāmī Vivekanand once remarked, “If all these vast amount of efforts had been spent in making man purer, gentler, more forbearing, this world would have a thousandfold more happiness than it has today.” 37 Śiksāpatrī has the potential to actualize this utterance of Swāmī Vivekanand.

Thus, Śiksāpatrī helps one to refine the innate and primordial nature and more importantly his negative feelings that are morally degenerative and ethically disastrous. It shows us the way to refrain from the degenerative causes and enlightens the path towards the glory through righteous moral behaviour and positive thinking. It not only brightens the avenue of our daily endeavour but also our attempt to attain the highest spiritual pedestal.

**Purity of Thought**

*Lord Swaminarayan* goes a step ahead in explaining the meaning of non-violence. It’s not only through the deeds and words but also through thoughts that one commits violence. He explains that even if one hears or sees inappropriately, he is said to have committed violence because such act not only vitiates body, mind and intellect also the soul of the person.
Lord Swaminarayan strongly believes that once a person finds fault in his fellow human beings, this tendency becomes his nature. Gradually he does not even hesitate to find faults and think evil of his elders, teachers and holy scriptures. Ultimately this negative tendency leads him towards the treachery of saint and God.

“Once Lord Swaminarayan asked, ‘What is that particular vice on account of which all the virtues of a person turns into vices?’ Devānanda Swāmī replied, ‘Treachery of a devotee of God is that vice which turns all the virtues of a person into vices.’ Lord Swaminarayan seconds the answer.” 38

Thus, the tendency of finding faults in others and malign others is the greatest sin of all for which there is no expiation in the scriptures or elsewhere. Lord Swaminarayan expresses His aversion for a person who finds faults in others, thus,

“A person who malign God and the devotee should be considered as rabid dog, though that person may be considered as satsangi by others. Moreover, just as a patient of Tuberculosis is not been cured by any medicine, the evil nature of the person also will not be eliminated by any means from the heart of that person who malign God and His devotees. Even the person who has committed the sins of killing infinite Brahmins, or killing infinite children, or killing infinite women, or killing infinite cows, or cohabiting with the infinite preceptor’s wife has a chance of being redeemed someday, holy scriptures have described the remedies to get rid of such great sins but the scriptures have no remedy for the sin of maligns God and devotees.” 39

Thus, through Śiksāpatrī, Lord Swaminarayan wants to transform demonical nature of human beings into divine because without divine qualities, moral progress is impossible. Moreover, Śiksāpatrī teaches the
best use of speech to eulogize God and His devotees, to chant the name of God and to sing devotional songs in praise of God. As the only way to purify the speech, thought and action. To safeguard one’s self from the crookedness of the thought, speech, and deed, one has to remain in the constant company of a God-realized saint.

To quote H. M. Joshi, “The standard of value plays a key role in the treatment of moral conduct and reflection. Among the types of value it is natural for moral thinkers to place moral value as foremost among various values. However, there are religious, cultural and spiritual values which have their legitimate claim to be regarded as intrinsic and supreme.”

Moral value plays an important role in process of becoming of an individual, cultivation of an individual, self-development, adoration of self. Moral value is called supreme value because it has direct connection with practice and conduct.

Notes & References:

3. Śiksāpatrī, 155, 156
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5. Śiksāpatrī, 139
6. Śiksāpatrī, 140
7. Śiksāpatrī, 141
8. Śiksāpatrī, 143
9. Śiksāpatrī, 144
10. Śiksāpatrī, 145
11. Śiksāpatrī, 146
13. The Bhagvad Gītā 16/1
15. Mundak Upaniṣad, 3-1-6
16. As quoted in the book *Dharma for all*, Shree RamKrishna Math, Madras, 1985, p. 81 Śankarācārya *Vivekachudamani*
17. *Vačanāṁṛta*, Gadhāda First 34
18. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 18
19. *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparva, Mokṣa dharma, 105/7
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22. Proverb 6:27,28,29
23. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 135, 137
24. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 160
25. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 159
26. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 175, 176, 177
27. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 178, 179
28. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 181, 184, 190
32. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 11, 12
33. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 15, 16
34. Mathew 7:1, 2, 3, 5
35. Joshi H.M., *Traditional and Contemporary Ethics, Western and Indian*, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Delhi, 2000, p. 404
36. *Śīkṣāpatrī*, 75, 20, 21, 26, 29, 199, 202
38. *Vačanāṁṛta*, Loyā 16
39. *Vačanāṁṛta*, Gadhāda Last 12
40. Joshi H. M., *Traditional and Contemporary Ethics, Western and Indian*, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Delhi, 2000, p. 130