

Rule - 10

Duty and Liberty

One shall regard oneself under restrictions to follow altruistic rulings of society, while following the rules of individual welfare one shall be free.

यत्संयमो न वियमो वियमो यन्न संयमः॥

Social discipline is not individual discipline; individual discipline is not social. —Atharva Veda IV. 3.7

Duty: Public and Private — The last principle is designed to make simple the conflict that may sometimes arise between the personal and social obligations of a man. Occasions there are when private rights have to be jealously guarded, while at the same time there is a demand on our conscience of public interest which seems to require sacrifice, not only of personal interest, but also of personal liberty. In foregoing his personal inclination a public-spirited member of society may not feel any great hesitation, though a strain too heavy upon even what are simply likes and dislikes of individuals, may sometimes prove dangerous. Break not the back of the camel with the burden of even a straw. The problem becomes serious when what seems to be a private duty draws you one way, while the voice of the majority has decided otherwise. Which way will you then follow? How far should the majority morally compel our compliance with its decisions and where should it leave us free to choose our own line of procedure?

A question simply of details of conduct but one concerning the practice of a cardinal virtue, viz., self-abnegation has been incorporated in the

Principles because of its daily and even hourly recurrence in our social life and of the very important issues which hang on its solution alone. There could be no corporate existence, if the rights of the individual and the combined claim on him of the corporation of which he is a member, were not clearly demarcated one from the other.

Independence versus License — Distinction is the same as that made in common parlance between the interests of private and public life. The independence allowed by Dayananda in the former is not independence absolute. In every department of life, whether public or private, discipline is the keynote of Dayananda's regime of human conduct. We have to abide by the rules. Whether by our own lights or by the lights of the majority of our fellow-workers, is the problem. And the Rishi's answer is, by both. The Principle indicates the respective sphere of each of these lights. Independence would be license, if it were to be interpreted as the liberty to shrink discipline, to flout rules.

Minority and Majority — The injunctions of the Vedas, which are our primary criteria of right and wrong, can neither be defined nor construed by votes. Even one vote of a Veda-knowing Brahmana is weightier in this regard than any number of votes of those ignorant of the scriptures. No mathematician would submit a mathematical riddle to be solved by a show of hands among lay men. The writings of the wise, and the example they have set—our next two tests of truth and untruth—can also be rightly understood and explained with regard to the manner in which they bear on our present problems, by those unbiasedly devoted to a study of these. The voice of conscience, our unfailing internal monitor is, as we have shown elsewhere, our last moral mentor. Its dictates depend upon the training we have had, our nurture during preceding and present lives. Men competent to decide — and they are a few — can alone be set

on this delicate job. Let them not be pitted against an illiterate mob, whose passions are moved by the sentiment of the moment.

Where to follow Majority — The voice of majority is to be allowed to prevail only in matters of procedure. It is on this account that Dayananda introduces this phase of social activity last. The superiority which the wise may claim for their sagacious judgement even in the laying out of details, should display itself in this respect in their ability to persuade those who are intellectually less fitted to judge. That the opinion of the learned is sound will be invariably tested by results. The majority will instinctively obey their leaders, if the latter show by actual achievements that they lead their following mostly to success. The privilege to guide has associated inalienably with it, a supreme sense of responsibility. Guidance which often fails cannot in future be implicitly relied on. To command unquestioning obedience, it has to combine in itself the conjoint magnetism of sagacity and self-sacrifice. What the masses abhor is self-interest in the leaders. Let true Brahmanas come to the fore and instinctive reverence on the part of the mob will deservedly be their instantaneous meed. Occasions arise, as on the outbreak of a war, when the whole nation entrusts the helm in the hands of a single captain, the wisest, the coolest, the most trustworthy man. Then the rule is unquestioning obedience.

The Limits of Liberty — Whether the leading voice be that of the majority or of an intellectual aristocracy, or even in cases of emergency, of a single dictator, the golden rule which should guide the choice of the worker, i.e., the man or woman in the ranks is that if the obedience or disobedience of the command affects, in its result, only his person, he is free to obey it, or say no. In cases, however, where the social welfare is at stake, the individual member must unconditionally submit to the will of all. The commanding authority, too, has always to keep this line of

demarcation in view. In the interest of State or Society, let the authorities be exacting. In the personal affairs of the subject their interference, if any, should be simply advisory.

The Province of Law —Dayananda means this commandment to be borne in mind by the framers of rules, the executors of law as also those that come under its jurisdiction. The line he draws between the sphere of private liberty on the one hand, and of social or communal duty on the other, is very clear and sharp. This distinction observed, many of the entanglements that make a knotty problem of what should be the social, political and national behaviour of men, will vanish.

The Province of Samaj — The authorities in every sphere have to confine their surveillance to that phase alone of the common men's lives, which comes within their immediate purview. The military, for instance, should not dabble in religion, nor judiciary in education. The Arya Samaj being a religious body, with a comprehensive programme of individual and social reform has a wider scope of functions than any other corporate authority. Here even the individual lives of the members come under watch and ward. Immorality, be it individual or social, will upset the moral working of the whole society. Continual non-performance or irregular performance of Sandhya or any other Samskara on the part of its members even in their homes will stultify the religious existence of the community. In these things the Samaj cannot remain silent without nullifying itself. With due regard to the conditions of the society around it, it will fix a moral minimum, below which no member will be allowed to sink without fear of forfeiture of social rights which membership confers on him. Encouragement will always be given to individuals to rise above that minimum. From time to time this minimum will also be revised, so as to make progress constant. This minimum, then, will in the case of every individual Samaj, or of a body of Samajas, constitute

the line between the sphere, on the one hand of personal liberty, and on the other of social duty, of the members. To remain in the forefront of reforming bodies, the moral and social level of the members of the Arya Samaj should always be considerably higher than that of the surrounding masses. While conviction in the teachings of the Vedas, demanded from the members, should be complete, their practice in conformity with the doctrines should be allowed to be progressive. There is no sphere of the lives of individuals which can, in their relation to the Arya Samaj, be entirely private. It will in practice remain private, conduct fixed by the Samaj for the time being. As the minimum rises, the scope of privacy will gradually be curtailed, and the responsibility of the members to the Samaj by degrees increase. The tenth principle will in its broad outlook apply at the stages.

Our Ever-expanding Obligation — Let us carry this rule a little further, and looking at ourselves as parts of the Arya Samaj and at the Arya Samaj, as it stands at present, as a part of a greater whole humanity, consider our gradually broadening responsibility as the wholes to which we belong, by degrees expand.

The first five principles, we have shown, are our credal minimum. In the matter of these, there can be no compromise with either a majority or a minority. In practice, too, nothing in contravention with our accepted principles should ever be asked or accepted to be done by us. Morality must be enforced, and even if in the name of a system of religion, some obscenity or immorality be exhorted to, the Arya Samaj is bound to raise its unanimous voice against it. Where non-Arya Samajists are in a majority, the Arya Samaj shall exert itself to subvert their decisions, if immoral. While living in company with non-Arya Samajists, the Samajists will cling to certain civic rights of their own. Adoration of Parameshvara, for instance, is every citizen's personal concern of inviolable sanctity.

The Arya Samajist will not force this concern on non-Arya Samajists, nor will he allow non-Arya Samajists to gratuitously interfere with his discharge of his obligation in this behalf. The same, too, will be his attitude as regards the reading of the Vedas. Aryan prayer is public as well as private. In private meditation, the adorer will be guided by rules laid down by yogis, those who have an experience of occult meditative exercises and their highly exhilarating results. For congregation, the particulars as to the time and place etc. of the performance have to be prescribed by the Samaj, which arranges it. In this particular each member should subordinate his own voice to that of the majority. In all other Yajnas and performances held privately or conjointly with the society, the same rule applies. Greater care is needed when these or such other duties are performed in public places. Demonstration is a part of civic religious activity. As at present constituted, the society in every country is made up of persons of various creeds and sects. The religion of the Vedas does not prescribe fanatic haughtiness as a part of ritual rigidity. Where essentials are involved, the Arya Samajist must of necessity be firm; in non-essentials he should always be accommodating and peaceful. Not budging an inch before a recalcitrant non-Arya Samajist bigot, he should always be on the guard against adopting a bigotted attitude of a similar type himself. Civic peace is a part of religious propriety of conduct. To religion in the broader sense, the maintenance of good will among God-made human beings is more conducive than bloodshed for adherence to a minor man-made form. The evolution of a sense of national, and looking further, international oneness, is a sacred mission of religion. It is religion alone that can look beyond social and geographical borders. The individuality of the smaller wholes preserved, their arrogance has to be laid as an offering on the altar of service to the greater whole. Let every religious association preserve its moral and spiritual essence. With this reservation, let it merge its being in the broader

being of humanity In what concerns the internal welfare of communities and states, they are individually free to manage their own affairs. In international affairs, however, let them forget they are separate entities.

One in Many — The implications of the tenth commandment are thus very varied and wide, in fact, as varied as the varied phases of human activity and the different divisions of the human family into larger and smaller wholes, and as wide as the human world itself. The significance of this commandment gets wider and wider, as our social and humanitarian outlook becomes steadily broader and broader. Without destroying them severally, it aims at unifying the good in all sects, all communities, all nationalities, all colours, all creeds. It shall maintain diversity, out of which by the miraculous power of love it will evolve an unprecedented unity. The differences should be suffered to remain, to contribute to the variegated charm of corporate oneness. Not tedious monotony of the dead but beautiful unity of the living—One in Many—is the aim, the mission, the social and political and cultural formula of the church of Lord Dayananda.