

This is why everything we do to prevent and punish acts of terror must flow from the basic premise that these not only take away innocent lives, but also divide our society, create mistrust among people and leave scars that can take decades to heal. In that respect, terrorism is worse than an act of war against the nation, because terror acts are executed by stealth making no distinctions between civilians and military between men, women and children, old and young, rich and poor.

In our anti-terror strategy, if we take the human being as the focus of our collective work, we will be able to do the right thing. But if we begin from abstract ideologies and impersonal categories that divide society along various boundaries based on religion, language region etc. we may end up fighting each other and doing each other harm.

The Brahmanda Purana evaluates Sanatana Dharma:

*“The roots of Sanatana Dharma are stated to be in being free from malice and greediness; observance of austerity, compassion for all creatures, self-control, chastity, truth, tenderness, forgiveness, and fortitude”.*

The Gandhian perspective is really more about pure ethics and spirituality than about religion in a narrow sense of the term. It transcended religion because of its undogmatic universalism and its ultimate liberating potential even in the mundane world. But he did not decry religion, because he was convinced with its powerful potential to inspire and sustain moral conduct.

Non-violence (*ahimsa*) of Hinduism in Gandhian perspective was not just a negative concept of avoiding violence; in fact, it required its practitioner to be socially engaged, proactively kind and caring. An important aspect of the Gandhian perspective thus is its emphasis.

Gandhiji derived inspiration for selfless service as much from Christianity and Islam, as from Hinduism and Jainism. He found in this the very core of religion and true spirituality. Indian religions, including Hinduism, have a long tradition of, and scriptural backing to, selfless service to others, including even animals, which Gandhi rediscovered.

In these days of competitive identity politics, we need to remember the address of Jawaharlal Nehru to the AICC Session in 1961 when he said ‘that communalism of the majority is far more dangerous than, the communalism of the minority.’ Not condoning the latter he stated, ‘the communalism of a majority community is apt to be taken for nationalism’.

In particular when politics intrudes into and takes over religion, violence seems to follow. Innocent people are slaughtered in the name of God. But if we turn things the other way