

## **REVISED QUESTIONERE**

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#### **VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBKUM Introductory Speech**

*The heritage of India's, multi-cultural, multi-religious racial diversity, multilingual and its inclusiveness has forged through centuries. The remarkable capacity to absorb, assimilate and interweave strands of artistic, philosophical and other achievements of various cultures fostered an enrichment of cultural repertoire has thrived and blossomed over a span of centuries. From early times, these fertile exchanges perhaps, lay the foundations that later became the bedrock for a fruitful engagement and integration between communities*

*For centuries it has provided a home to very significant number of practitioners of practically every other major religion of the world, be it Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism or the Bahais. India is the birthplace of Hindiusm, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism .*

*The history of India, in essence, is a narrative of conversations between different civilizations and, indeed, conversation with the nature itself. India is home to scores of languages, hundreds of dialects, thousands of cuisines, a medley of races, colors, landscapes and cultures. This assimilation and accommodation of diversity has contributed to the richness of its composite culture and durability of its civilization.*

*It is this intrinsic unity, integrity and harmony that enabled India to fight for its Independence against the British might as one voice for the cause of freedom. There were many languages but one voice. And it is this unique inherent unity that is the cornerstone to growth of India's success.*

*The tendencies of crafting cleavages like those of aggressive communalism, regionalism, linguistic and religious intolerance are some tendencies that need to be relinquished. It needs to be said that causes responsible for the communalism and its excesses is not religion per se but the ignorance, bigotry and selfishness of*

*people who , in an attitude of cynical opportunism, use religion for their own sinister ends. Factors popularizing communalism and communal politics have little to do enlightenment , spirituality and values that all religions teach, and more to do with mass mobilization and populism. These affect the age-old synergetic fiber of the country and need to be arrested.*

*Terrorism, the most heinous of crimes, needs to be uprooted. Terrorism and Violence are to be absolutely condemned. The security and safety of the country is not negotiable. Terrorism has no religion or boundary and must be dealt with severely. Strict laws dealing with perpetrators and those who take the life of innocents must be enacted. Its perpetrators need to be brought to books. Strong action has to taken against them. Neighboring countries harboring terrorists need to be counseled. The shocking abduction of the Christian priest in Herat by Taliban extremists needs to be condemned.*

*All acts of violence against women need to be condemned. Efforts towards changing fuedal mindsets must be made.*

*To construct a peaceful, prosperous India, an extension of the spirit that has sustained India through all its vicissitudes of history must be rekindled. Sylvan Levi refers in vivid terms to the greatness of the Indian spirit in these words: "From Persia to the Chinese Sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propogated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to hold her place amongst the great nations summarizing and symbolizing the spirit of humanity".*

## QUESTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

**Q 1.** *The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi as well as Dr. Ambedkar and Jawarlal Nehru, Sardar Valabbhai Patel and others thought the ideals of democracy, secularism, freedom of religion, and as intrinsic and priceless. They are imbibed into our Constitution. The spirit of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum” or the whole world is a family and social inclusion as well as “inclusive politics” is embedded in India democracy. Is there a Global trend seeping into local politics where majoritism and excluevism are is engulfing minority identities ?*

**Q.2.** *The people of India share a common destiny , hopes and aspirations. The clearest evidence of this exists in the many Hindu-Muslim-Christian shared sites in the inimitable art and architecture in every region of the country. In this syncreticism shows the contribution of communities to social harmony, inter-religious tolerance and resistance to separation and violence. How can tendencies towards religious pluralism and tolerance be energized ?*

**Q. 3.** *All Indians look towards taking India forward. We have asked for “change” , “development” and “governance” today. Ache din has swept our youth off their feet giving them new hope. The success of the magnificent Mars Orbiter Mission, Swacch Bharat, the Clean Ganga project the Aadhaar card project and the Jan Dhan Yojana are excellent projects. Although some of these are projects were undertaken by the earlier Government, the new Government has adopted them . FDA in retail has raised hopes. Through social media we hear of the propagation of a 100 modern cities, shopping malls, waterparks, bullet trains, corporate culture and highways and freeways that are in the offing.*

*On the other hand, many of the new generation have pressing issues in mind, like jobs , the relentless price rise, the inflation and corruption. Your views on the shape of things to come.*

**Q. 4.** *Gandhiji said “The people of India are so hungry that God can only appear to them in the form of bread”; The illustrious Ila Bhatt has said that “Poverty is violence with the approval of society”. And our Nobel Prize laureate Amyata Sen*

*said "The future belongs to nations with grains not guns." There can be no democratic freedom without social justice which demands the freeing of the individual from poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and ignorance.*

*How can the situation of marginalized and poor be enhanced for the better ?*

**Q. 5.** *This question pertains to Education : The present Union Minister Shri Venkaiah Naidu explicitly stated in 2013 that the Government "would change text books once it came into power." On 24<sup>th</sup> November a dikhat was issued in the Bastar District , Chattisgarah, that no Principal in Convent schools can be called "Father" but "Acharya" or Pracharya". Considering the immense Jesuit contribution to the field of Education what does this mean for our Educational System ?*

*Other related questions are ;*

*a. There are intriguing questions are on confusing myth and science. Will the scientific temper that has taken India to tremendous heights be retained? Will it alter the pattern of thinking and create a medieval mindset ?*

*b. Will the history of caste and gender hierarchy be on the rise ?*

*c. There is the question of Indian and Foreign languages. Your task on that*

*d. Will there be an offensive against genuine scholarship and a loss of rational and national historiography ? For instance, Dinanath Batra's has authored 9 books that have been translated into Gujarati and introduces in 42 000 schools already. Are these books authentic ? Many more schools may , in future have them in their curricula.*

*How can scholars and intellectuals influence contribute to the debate on the revision of education and history ?*

**Q.6** *Unlike other countries in the world, India has a proud heritage of a multi-cultural, multi-religious diversity, multilingual heritage. Are we, like other countries, moving towards a monoculturism ?*

**Q.7.** *Dr. Najma Heptulla, Hon'ble Member of Minority Affairs, in her Presidential address, reiterated the NDA government's commitment to "sabka saath sabka vikas"; "safeguarding the constitutional and legal rights of the minorities and provide them protection and equal opportunity to ensure their economic and social betterment... Government is doing its best for communal harmony and will continue to do so," and said the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi believed in "inclusive development", there " no discrimination against anyone on the grounds of religion, language or caste".*

*Notwithstanding, The question remains why are there only 2 Muslim and barely any Christian Representatives in Parliament of (282 Seats); there is also the question of violence against Minorities, the issue of the Pune techie Mohsin Sheikh's murder allegedly by the Hindu Jagran Sena, communal violence in Muzzaffarnagar, Saharanpur, Rampur and other parts of UP and some parts of MP are some burning issues. Comment. The majority of prisoners are minorities like Dalits, (22% ) Muslims( 22%) and Tribals ( 11% )? " Most experts say this disturbing trend is not because these communities commit more crimes. Rather it is because they are economically and socially underprivileged, unable to fight costly cases or even pay bail. Some of these communities are targeted with false charges....." (Times of India, Mumbai Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014 p. 1 ) Comment.*

**Q. 8.** *Shri Fali S Nariman said "Those who indulge in hate speech must be prevented by Court processes initiated at the instance of the Commission because that is the body that represents Minorities in India. Whoever indulges in such hate speech or vilification (whatever the community to which they belong) they must be proceeded against and the proceeding must be widely publicized," Shri Fali S Nariman said. ("Hinduism losing its benign face...no one at top stepping in: Fali SNariman ; NATION , **SUNDAY, SEP 14, 0 2014 ) COMMENT***

**Q. 9.** *Prejudice and racism are not new to the world. Last week shockingly in America, there was a horrific killing of a black man by a white policeman. Over the past few months, there have been several horrific racist attacks in our country as well . Reported cases of gruesome mob attacks on young men of African origin in Delhi ; the brutal killing of young Nido Tania from Arunachal Pradesh; the beating up 19-year-old Tania for the blonde streaks in his hair. Manipuri students in Bengaluru and Naga youth in Gurgaon were similarly attacked. There was a report that one of every 4 Indians practice untouchability.(The Times of India,Mumbai, p.1.*

) 27<sup>th</sup>. November 2014) ;Can the social justice machinery besides booking the criminals, set up an apparatus where it can try its hand at bringing about reformation of these such despicable acts of violence and change this ghastly mind-set?

**Q. 10.** The Government needs to be applauded on subject of the empowerment of women. Undoubtedly several more women are now represented in Parliament and are promised important positions and portfolios. However, paradoxically on the other hand, there is a rise in crime against women like rape, kidnapping, abduction, dowry deaths and immoral trafficking has increased. The front page of The Times of India, 25<sup>th</sup>. November 2014 Mumbai gave the following figures;

Rape 2012-2013 was 294; 2013-2014 was 432; rise in rate of rape 47%

Molestation 2012-2013 was 793 ; in 2013-2014 was 1,209; rise in rate 52%

Chain Snatching 2012-1013 was 1,269 ; in 2013-2014 was 2,110 ; rise 66%

What are the ways means of halting these attacks.

Further, today women are told what they must wear and how they must conduct themselves. They are also told who they must marry. They are told that Inter-religious marriages are undesirable for their own good. What are your views on : "love Jihad" and "honor Killings"

**Q. 11** An independent media is extremely important to the idea of modern India. It has an immense civilizational responsibility. In the last two decades it has influenced practically every aspect of our lives, whether it be politics, economics, culture, education et al. Will media succeed in the historic task of attempting in overcoming prejudice, religious conflict, and intolerance or its will its TRP rates make it look the other way ? Your take on the subject.

**Q. 12.** Respect for other religions is a sign of true humility of the spirit. The Rig Veda says: " The Real is one; sages call it by various names." This is the teaching of Islam, Christianity and all religions in its profoundest sense. There are many doors leading to the spiritual path.

*India is the cradle of civilization. In our great country the Bhakti and Sufi movements bound people in a close spiritual partnership. The writings of Ramananda and Kabir, Ramdas, Dadu, Tukaram and Tulsidas, Nanak and Caitanya and Sufis like Chishti, Baba Farid and Jami to name a few, are illustrious representatives of this philosophy.*

*How can these cherished synergetic ideals be proliferated?*

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*St Xaviers College Hall; 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 2015*