

ARISE, AWAKE AND BE VIGILANT TO SAFEGUARD DHARMA

SWAMI JYOTIRMAYANANDA

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The people of today's world may be classified into three distinct groups: 1) the major, aggressive and assertive group; 2) the minor, pseudo-secular group; and 3) the complacent and victimized group.

The major, aggressive and assertive group

The aggressive monotheistic traditions, comprising the first major group, are always assertive and therefore love to harp upon the superiority of their revealed faith. Proclaiming the 'only one way of salvation, or heaven', 'the only one book', 'the inerrancy of their book' and 'the only one Prophet' or 'the only one Saviour', they want to thrust on others their 'one way traffic to heaven'! They are intolerant of any other way to God. Dead against pluralism, they advocate monoculture. They even compete amongst themselves, and are ever engaged in increasing the sizes of their flocks, by hook or crook, 'harvesting the souls' of non-believers, dubbed by them as 'Heathens' and 'Kafirs'. They force one creed, one set of dogmas and beliefs down the throats of all the people. They attempt to destroy different forms of worship, claiming their one way of worship to be the only right one. They claim to have obtained from God, exclusive and irrevocable power of attorney to decide for all humans what is good and what is not redemptive for their souls. They create inter-religious wars and massacres, forcing their claims and dogmas on others. They do not give others freedom to think, freedom to believe, freedom to disbelieve and freedom to adopt a way of worship which suits his/her temperament. They divide the human race into conflicting armies and camps of Holy Believers and Unholy Non-Believers. As the world history bears ample testimony, they have mercilessly destroyed other religions and cultures that have not subscribed to their theology of 'one way traffic to heaven'.

It is this 'only one way' ideology that is inherently evil since it adopts a goal of world domination and is the major cause of today's worldwide unrest and terrorism which are playing havoc, resulting in untold misery to one and all. What the western scholars

now call as the “Clash of Civilizations” is nothing but the net outcome of this ‘only one way’ ideology.

The minor, pseudo-secular group

The second minor group comprising Non-Believers has scant regard for higher values of life, religion or spirituality. Many, being ardent votaries of hedonism, make a virtue of their atheism and rationalism. ‘Make hay while sun shines’ is their only credo and the ultimate goal of life. These are the leftists and the pseudo-secularists, some of whom do not even hesitate to act as the fifth columnists and traitors to their own country and culture. Normally, though they have just nuisance value, nevertheless we should be on guard against them because of the incalculable damage they can do to the polity, country and the culture.

Though they may pretend to speak often in the language of their so-called secularism, we invariably find them hobnobbing with the most rabid fundamentalists who are ready to compromise with the safety and security of the country. They may also be seen speaking in the language of ‘human-rights’, even without a trace of any humanity in themselves. And in league with the said first major group, they want to destroy the Hindu Dharma and the society, if they ever can.

The complacent and victimized group

Hindus, comprising the third group, who are well-known for their legendary ‘soul-killing’ tolerance and complacency, besides their lack of social and political awareness, are quite naturally the victims. They are today facing a multi-pronged attack from the aggressive segments of both monotheism and pseudo-secularism. They must, therefore, be taken seriously. An assertive organizational structure is thus crucially important for safeguarding their Dharma, their rights and interests.

Our greatest drawback

It is unfortunate that we Hindus as a society are greatly diversified and hence not united. This is our greatest drawback and the main cause of all our problems and sufferings, not only in India but the world over. Thus in spite of our individual strength, we often appear disorganized and weak as a group. The monotheistic religions naturally consider us as easy prey, like the sacrificial lamb.

Our Dharma is in jeopardy

As Hindus, we should realize that the future of our Dharma is in jeopardy as a result of an organized onslaught on it by the proselytizers of monotheism, who are working vigorously to eliminate Hindu Dharma and the Hindu Samaj (society). A relentless war is being waged against Hindu Dharma by the followers of the aggressive, monotheistic religions (principally Islam and Christianity) seeking to convert others into their respective faiths. The realization of that grim eventuality becoming a possibility should awaken every apathetic Hindu. For this, it is essential that an all out continuing and unifying effort is organized by the Hindus in an assertive way so that the impact is visible and effective under a unified consensus leading to at least a de-facto leadership of the Hindu community.

We do not speak with one voice

Though all three monotheistic religions too have their divisions based on doctrinal differences and may not even worship the same God in each other's places of worship, they have demonstrated their abilities to speak with one voice on issues of socio-political importance. For example, the 'World Council of Churches', 'World Council of Islamic Call' and the 'World Jewish Congress' do come together periodically to issue proclamations that affect their respective communities, worldwide. That kind of a united voice has been singularly absent for the Hindu community either in India or its diasporic community permanently settled outside of India.

We have too many leaders

A community's interest is doomed when it cannot speak with one voice. Too many people aspire to be our leaders and or the spokespersons, frequently contradicting each other. There are too many Hindu leaders and organizations each claiming to be superior to others. Acceptance of the collective responsibility by a united and wisely selected leadership is the key to success. When the united Hindu force is visible, the opponents would realize that their tactics are not worth following since it may eventually hurt their own interests.

Ours is a syncretic culture

Ours Hindu culture is syncretic, and our God is not capricious and tyrannical, sitting far away in the heaven, beyond the clouds, giving judgments and sending some to heaven and the rest to eternal hellfire. In tune with the exalted spiritual experience of our saints and sages, we believe that the spiritual paths are many (pluralistic) but God, as the Ultimate Reality, is One and non-dual. People of other faiths have to understand this basic spiritual principle of Hindu Dharma, if peace and harmony in the world are to be maintained. It will not be wrong to say that without this understanding, World Peace will ever remain a far cry.

Ours is inclusive pluralism and holistic catholicism

Wedded to an all-inclusive pluralism and holistic catholicism, we, the Hindus, have no qualms in accommodating people of other faiths subject to the principle of peaceful co-existence and mutual respect. History bears evidence to the fact that we have welcomed people of other faiths, when they sought shelter in India and Hindu rulers have always guaranteed the pursuit of different faiths. The doors of India and the hearts of the tolerant Hindu were and are even today open to all peace-loving people.

Need for a unified Hindu Force

The United Hindu Force would be like a steel wall. Any one who dares to dash against it with evil intentions would only hurt themselves. Now the question arises: How is it possible for us Hindus to become a formidable force, both in power and unity, to be reckoned with by our opponents? It may be emphasized that there is nothing in the world that one may pronounce as an established fact. Everything is subject to the 'WILL' of the people. It is the 'WILL' of the people that decides the future. Where there is a WILL there is a way. And the way must lead to the destination, which in our case is a Unified Hindu Force.

Developing a unified leadership structure

Perhaps an annual or periodic gathering of all prominent subdivisions and sects of the Hindus could be organized both in India and overseas with the purpose of seeking ways and means to foster greater unity on national as well as international levels. Such a gathering could also endeavour to develop a unified leadership structure and to consider issues and policies of basic importance in regard to the welfare of Hindus and their Dharma everywhere.

An a initial step in the USA

At least here in the USA, as an initial step, the various Indian organizations with Hindu membership, can come together, cutting across all barriers, of caste, language and geographical upbringing in India, and join hands into a United Hindu Forum of America (UHFA).

It is indeed a tragedy that with over 800 Hindu religious institutions (Temples and Ashrams) in the U.S.A., we do not even have a web-based linkage of such organizations to share information of mutual interest and benefit. If that can be accomplished either formally or informally, our efforts to foster and garner greater cooperation from the media to project our interests may be more successful. In addition, the film media, very popular and pervasive in India, could make a powerful and positive contribution with creation of films exalting patriotism, social health and traditional Indian values.

The anti-Hindu seculars of the media

In this context we should note very carefully what Sri S. Gurumurthy, the popular Hindu columnist of Chennai, calls as “the ISI work” done “more credibly” by the so-called seculars in the Indian media and elsewhere, who take every opportunity to misrepresent, nay malign Hindus and run down their hoary Dharma: “The ISI spends millions to convince the Muslims in Pakistan, in India and elsewhere that those who identify and assert themselves as Hindus are violent and India is anti-Muslim. The seculars in the media are doing the ISI work more credibly. Yes, they accomplish this by lying and suppressing the truth. They have no qualms or guilt doing that. Shame, indeed”.

Remain vigilant to safeguard Dharma

It is high time that those who are inclined to harm the Hindus change their attitude rather quickly and learn to respect others. Let us also warn the apathetic Hindus: Wake up! Mother India is calling for your aid and She is in distress. Arise, awake and remain vigilant to safeguard Dharma and the Nation. Regard the land of Bharat as the “Mother” (“*Bharat Mata*”), draw inspiration from the national song ‘*Vande Mataram*’, and be fired with the ‘Man-making gospel’ of Swami Vivekananda -- the great Hindu Monk of India, and take pride in the ancient culture of India. Remember the golden words of our saints and sages: ‘Dharma is that by which we rise to prosperity, civility and happiness. Strength and valor are virtues. Weakness and cowardice are evils’.

Countering the forces, which challenge our way of life?

As Dr. Mahesh Mehta, Vice Chairman of World Hindu Council (Overseas) rightly observed on the ‘Tenth Hindu Unity Day’ celebration in New York recently:

“No matter how much respect we may have for other religions, they have a fixed view about us. Since we do not agree with them, they assume that we are in conflict with them. In the light of the teachings of the spiritually enlightened saints and sages of India, we Hindus believe that all human beings and creatures are the veritable manifestations of God, the One Supreme Reality, who is Infinite and Eternal. For us God, as the One Divine Consciousness, is everywhere, in everybody and is the very substratum of all existence. This exalted Hindu view of spirituality is neither palatable nor acceptable to those who claim the monopoly of their God. This is one of the reasons that they are against us. That is why they malign and belittle Hindu Dharma. We have an excellent philosophy and ideas, but since we are not well organized and united, our viewpoints are not heard with the attention we deserve. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that we Hindus should recognize the problems with which Hindu society is confronted and counter the forces which challenge our way of life. We can do that only if we unite by coming together as one people.”

Hindu Unity and activism will rectify and prevent injustice and abuse

As Professor Babu Suseelan from Pennsylvania emphasized:

“Hindus have no choice but to unite, if they ever hope to regain dignity, strength and political power to confront the evil forces ranged against them. Aggressive assertiveness is required to project our desire for peace and co-existence. Hindus should be active, not passive. Hindu Unity and activism will rectify and prevent injustices and abuse whenever and wherever they occur. Our future survival and even the mankind require the propagation of the all- inclusive, spiritual, pluralistic Hindutva. If the adherents of monotheistic religions were as spiritually enlightened as Hindus, there would be no faith-based reasons for religious strife, war, brutality, oppression, murder, terrorism and coercive religious conversions.”

Truths realized by our sages 1500 BC

Quoting from Rig Veda and other Hindu scriptures, Ms. Lobo, Community News Director on the International Television Channel, New York, pointed out:

“The Concept of ‘*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*’ (the world is verily one single family) and ‘*ekam sat viprah bahuda vadanti*’ (God, as the One Supreme Reality, is non-dual, but the enlightened ones designate Him variously) was realized by our sages 1500 BC and enshrined this Eternal Truth in our Vedic scriptures. But the western world is only now talking about the world being a ‘global village’ and about ‘respect for human dignity’. Hindu Dharma teaches not only tolerance, respect for other creeds, and co-existence, but also respect for elders and the underprivileged ones, and even for the sub-human creatures, plants and trees; in short, to the kingdom of the entire movable and immovable in the creation.

“It is the traditional Hindu way to pray for the welfare and happiness of one and all, everywhere. A true Hindu may not merely say, ‘God Bless India’, (like others when they repeat ‘God Bless America’) but he will certainly pray for the peace and happiness of the whole world. Even to this day, his daily Universal Prayer is: “*lokaḥ samasthah sukhino bhavanthu*” (May the entire world be happy and peaceful).

“It is therefore our bounden duty to nurture, preserve and propagate the Hindu values of life all over the world, for peace and harmony, at a time when the world is endangered by acute unrest, crass materialism, and rabid fundamentalism.”

Do we live our culture and values, in our day-to-day life?

In the words of Br. Krishnamurthy of the Chinmaya Mission:

“Do we, the Hindu parents, know our Hindu culture and values, and live them in our day-to-day life? Only by setting an example to our growing children, we can effectively communicate these values to them. The parents must be proud of their culture. By their noble conduct and example, they can communicate culture and values effectively to their growing children. Are we really proud of our culture?”

Realize the magical powers of the word ‘HINDU’

“Unfortunately, disunity has been the bane of Hindu Society. A cursory glance at the Hindu history will testify to the fact that Hindus were defeated not because of any lack of gallantry and chivalry on their part, but because of the betrayal and treachery of our own people. Bringing all Hindus on one platform, and creating a feeling of fraternity -- irrespective of their caste, color, language, and geographical location -- in them, is the crying need of the hour.

“We Hindus, think primarily in terms of our language, province or sect, as Gujaratis, Punjabis, Tamils, Maharashtrians, Bengalis, Sindhis, or Shaivites, Vaishnavites and so on. We must understand one fact very clearly. When someone says he is a Malayalee, he limits himself to just 15 million people. If someone else describes himself as Gujarati, he reduces his size and strength to only 50 million people. But the moment someone proclaims, ‘I am a Hindu’, he instantly joins the mighty club of one billion strong people. It is unfortunate that we do not realize the magical powers of the word ‘HINDU’”, lamented Narayan Kataria, the Organizer-Coordinator of the ‘Tenth Hindu Unity Day’ in New York.

An honest critique of Hindu Unity

Commenting on the Hindu Unity Day Celebration in New York, Sadhu Rangarajan, Founder-President, Sister Nivedita Academy, Bangalore, who is forthright and outspoken in his utterance, had the following to say:

“Thank you very much for sending us the details about the Hindu Unity Day Celebration in New York. All that we wish is that these thoughts should not just remain on paper or find expression only in meetings and conferences, but are to be translated into action. A clear-cut policy should be formulated and a solid plan is to be chalked out and implemented to unite the Hindus of all hues and colors. For how many millennia we will go on proclaiming at the top of our voice that Hinduism stands for ‘*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*’ and that Hinduism stands for universality of religions and accepts all forms of worship as different pathways to one Ultimate Reality. Who among the non-Hindus is prepared to listen to this discourse? Let our leaders stop playing the worn out gramophone record. Let them boldly declare that Hinduism, Hindutva and Hindu Nationalism are identical, that every Hindu must necessarily be a patriot first and last and that Bharat Mata is the Supreme Goddess and She should be worshipped first and foremost. Worship of Bharat Mata alone is

the one and only way to unite all Hindus inside and outside the country. Until this is done, all talk about Hindu Dharma and Hindu Unity will remain as mere rhetoric.

“If there is any attack on the Hindu religion or society, it is only the RSS, Shiva Sena, Bajrang Dal and VHP who rise for the protection of the Hindus and most of the so-called Hindu spiritual leaders are just silent spectators of what is happening around them. They do not even raise their voices in defense of the Hindus or for Hindu rights.

“When a State Government bans conversion, the entire Christian church including the Archbishop, Bishop, Priests, Nuns, Evangelists and those running Christian institutions come out on the street to hold demonstrations against it. Many Muslim Mullahs, Moulvis and Imams do not hesitate to clamor openly in support of Muslim militants even when the latter’s terrorist activities inflict mayhem on our society. However, even if Hindu women are raped and their children butchered by fanatic and fundamentalist militants, our exalted spiritual leaders often appear to be unconcerned about it and their voice is seldom raised in support of the Hindus. While these spiritual leaders even hesitate to sing the national song (*‘Vande Mataram’*) considering it as political, they are not at all ashamed to sing *‘Iswara Allah tere naam’* or *‘Yesu pitaa Prabhu tu’* in the Bhajans. Hindus, should therefore arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached”, exhorted Sadhu Rangarajan.

CONCLUSION:

The crying need of the hour and the bounden duty of every Hindu

Is it not the bounden duty of every Hindu to arise, awake and be vigilant to safeguard Hindu Dharma? Swami Vivekananda exemplified that spirit by acting on it over a hundred years ago by relentlessly calling on all of us to do our part and shine brilliantly as resplendent stars of pluralism.

What this “global village” of ours most urgently needs today is a true understanding of our credo “*ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*”. We have nurtured it for nearly four millennia and it is time that we make a concerted attempt to communicate the vitality of our scintillating faith to our brothers and sisters of the Abrahmic religions so that they can understand the redemptive value of our credo for ensuring World Peace. That is not easy to do if we do not UNITE ourselves as a people.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of those listed below, from whose writings he has drawn some of the materials and adapted here. A few of them have also made helpful comments and suggestions in the preparation of this article. Their labors as well as my own efforts in the preparation of this article will have been amply rewarded if it provokes the readers to think deeply about our problems and motivates them to act collectively as a united community. This article therefore has no copyright restrictions. All those who have regard for Dharma and concern for the society, are most welcome to reproduce, transmit and circulate this article, far and wide, with due acknowledgement, as they deem fit:

1. Alexander, Dr. C. Alex, Odenton, Maryland

2. Asnani, Prof. G. C., Poona
3. Bhatnagar, Sri Krishan, Silver Spring, Maryland.
4. Gurumurthy, Sri S., Chennai.
5. Kataria, Sri Narayan, New York
6. Rangarajan, Sadhu, Bangalore
7. Sach Dev, Sri Ram, New York
8. Shardanand, Dr., Gaithersburg, Maryland

SWAMI JYOTIRMAYANANDA
swamijyoti@vivekanandagospel.org
<http://www.vivekanandagospel.org>