

The Emerging National Vision

Sita Ram Goel

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Dr. Dhar, Mr. Ghosh and Friends,*

What Mr. Ghosh has said about me has added to my diffidence which was there from the very beginning because I am not used to public speaking. I do not know if I am a good writer at all. But I know it for sure that I am a very poor speaker. You will, therefore, forgive me if I am somewhat slipshod, if I become abrupt and incoherent at times.

In fact, it would have been in the fitness of things if the speaker today had been our friend Sri Ram Swarup, because whatever I have written and whatever I have to say today really comes from him. He gives me the seed-ideas which sprout into my articles, long and short. He gives me the perspective. He gives me the framework of my thought. Only the language is mine. The language also would have been much better if it was his own. My language becomes sharp at times; it annoys people. He has a way of saying things in a firm but polite manner, which discipline I have never been able to acquire. I wonder if he will be able to add some comments at the end of this meeting.

Now, coming to the subject of today, that is, the Emerging National Vision, I feel that perhaps it is presumptuous on my part to speak about the National Vision before an audience from Bengal, particularly before an audience from this city of Calcutta. It was in this land of Bengal, it was in this city of Calcutta in the opening decades of this century that we obtained a clear picture of the National Vision. You have only to read the works of Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo and listen to the songs of Rabindranath in order to know what

* Dr. Sujit Dhar and Shri Amitav Ghosh.

that National Vision was, as also to understand what that Vision is likely to be when it revives and is reaffirmed. I have nothing to add to what these great men have written and expounded and what they have shown in their own lives. I am only a poor interpreter of their Vision as it should unfold, as it should emerge in the present situation.

The National Vision which was expounded by these great men rose to its heights, reached a high watermark, attained its acme in the Swadeshi Movement. The same imperialist forces, that is, Islamic imperialism (or the residues of Islamic imperialism) and British imperialism had combined to partition Bengal, to partition a hand which God had made one. But at that time, the conspiracy was frustrated. The game was defeated because the National Vision was very clear, very firm. In fact, the Swadeshi Movement was the beginning in real earnest of the National struggle for freedom which was earlier confined to some distinguished people meeting together and passing a number of resolutions. It was for the first time that India witnessed in the history of the freedom movement a mass mobilization of her people. The echoes of the Swadeshi Movement were heard far and wide, all over India, particularly in Maharashtra and the Punjab, as also the *mantras* that were given during the Swadeshi Movement—the *mantra* of Swadeshi, the *mantra* of Swarajya, the *mantra* of Vande Mataram which pulsated with all the aspirations of an awakened nation. That was a complete picture of the National Vision as it had to be.

But, unfortunately, in the hands of the latter-day leadership, in the later phases of the freedom struggle, that Vision got diluted. It was obscured by certain other visions. It lost its clarity and the result was the tragedy of partition. We know what happened and how the events unfolded. Bengal has suffered the most due to that tragedy. The wounds which Bengal has suffered and which have now become running sores—well, I do not have to dwell on the

subject. You know it all. I have only to point out, it is my painful duty to point out, that this land of Bengal which has suffered so much due to the loss of the National Vision has neglected that Vision to a greater extent than the rest of this country. It is, therefore, the duty of Bengal to resurrect that Vision, to recover that vision, to reaffirm that Vision, and thus reclaim its lost leadership of India.

Bengal today feels neglected. But the fault is not of the rest of India. The fault lies with Bengal itself. Bengal has neglected its own heritage. Bengal has ignored its own Vision which it had once given to the whole of India and which, in turn, had given to Bengal the leadership of India. I need not go into details. You know what is happening in Bengal today. It is not only the perspective but also the personal character of its great men which is being questioned. As I read the various debates going on in the Bengali press, in Bengali novels and other writings, I am really pained. How can things go down to such a low level in a land which had once raised India to such great heights?

What was that National Vision which these great men gave us and which inspired India to launch such a great struggle for freedom? Remember the revolutionaries which India produced at that time. They were great men and women, those revolutionaries who mounted the gallows with the Gita in hand and with Vande Mataram on their lips. They were not like the latter-day revolutionaries. I can say with a full sense of responsibility that quite a few of the latter-day revolutionaries sound like ordinary criminals. The earlier revolutionaries were of a different character because their Vision was of a different character.

What was that Vision? In a way, it was nothing new. It was only a restatement in modern language, in a modern setting, of the ancient Vedic Vision as unfolded in the Vedas, in the Upanishads, in the Jainagama, in the Tripitaka, in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, in the

Puranas, in the Dharmashastras and in the latter-day poetry of saints and siddhas. We have had countless spokesmen of that Vision throughout our history.

The first dimension of that Vision was that India was the land of Sanatana Dharma. That was the first and foremost point of that Vision. In fact, Sri Aurobindo had said in his Uttarpara Speech that India would rise with the rise of Sanatana Dharma, that India would sink if Sanatana Dharma sank, and that India would die if it were at all possible for Sanatana Dharma to die. This is not the occasion for me to talk about Sanatana Dharma. All I want to say is that Sanatana Dharma is a natural religion, that it is in harmony with the development of human nature, with the growth of human aspirations. It is not something artificial like Christianity and Islam. It is not a set of mechanical beliefs constructed by the outer mind of man and imposed upon its followers.

The second dimension of that Vision was that of a vast and variegated culture. According to *adhara* and *adhikara*, the various sections of our population, various segments of our society, various regions of our country, developed their own culture, developed their own art, developed their own literature. We have a vast literature—sacred, secular and scientific—which grew in different regions of this country, in different social and cultural surroundings. We have a lot of art, architecture, sculpture and music, etc. It is a vast fabric, this art and literature. But its spirit is the spirit of Sanatana Dharma. It is informed by Sanatana Dharma in all its details. That was the second dimension of that National Vision.

The third dimension of that Vision was that this great society, the society which we describe as Hindu society today, was reared on the basis of spirituality, on the basis of Sanatana Dharma, on the basis of a great culture created by Sanatana Dharma. The Varnashrama Dharma which has shaped this great society has been corrupted today into

a single English phrase—the Caste system which everybody is busy accusing of all sorts of crimes. But it was Varnashrama Dharma which created a complex social system that has survived till today with vitality and vigour, in spite of all vicissitudes of fortune, in spite of so many foreign invasions, throughout these countless ages. Varnashrama Dharma has been defended by all our great men in recent times. It was defended by Swami Dayananda, it was defended by Bankim Chandra, it was defended by Vivekananda, it was defended by Mahatma Gandhi, by Madan Mohan Malaviya, by Lokamanya Tilak. All these great men have been unanimous that Varnashrama Dharma has saved Hindu society from destruction—the destruction which overtook so many societies outside India at the hands of Christianity, Islam and Communism. That was the third dimension of that National Vision.

The fourth dimension of that National Vision was that this great society, this Hindu society, had a history of its own—a history of how this society arose, how it developed, how it created a spirituality which was akin to the spirituality of many ancient nations like Greece, Rome, China, Egypt, Persia. We were told that history of India was the history of Hindu society, of Hindu culture, of Hindu spirituality, that it was the history of the Hindu nation and not the history of foreign invaders as we are being taught today. That was the fourth dimension of that National Vision.

And the last dimension which these great men stressed, which they affirmed again and again, was that this land of Bharatavarsha was one indivisible whole; that it was the cradle of Hindu society, of Hindu culture, of Hindu spirituality; that it was the homeland of the Hindu nation; and that other communities were welcome to live in this land provided they came to terms with Hindu society and Hindu culture. They did not think in terms of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Hindustan and Bangladesh. Today

Bharatavarsha stands divided into several units which are not only politically but also culturally hostile to each other and we seem to have become reconciled to that division. But the Vision that was given to us by our great men was that of Bharatavarsha as an indivisible whole, not only geographically but also culturally. That Vision rose before us during the Swadeshi Movement, in the first decade of this century.

There were some other visions also struggling for supremacy at the same time. Those other visions had an advantage on their side because of the educational system provided by the British, imposed on us by the British. This was the same educational system which we have in this country today. This educational system has been sponsoring and spreading those other visions of India.

There was the vision of Islamic imperialism. It said that India like pre-Islamic Arabia and pre-Islamic Persia and like so many other ancient lands conquered by Islam, was a land of darkness. It said that India had to be brought to the "light" of Islam, converted into a *Dar-ul-Islam*.

Later on, another vision was provided by Christian imperialism. It also said that India was a land of darkness, of heathenism, of paganism, of unbelievers. It said that the "light" of Christianity had to be brought to India, that India had to be converted into a land of Christ.

A third vision came to us in the shape of the white man's burden. This vision shared something of the crusading zeal of Islamic and Christian imperialism. But it spoke in the language of rationalism and humanism. It spoke in an enlightened language. It said that India was a land of poor, illiterate, down-trodden, exploited and emasculated human beings who had to be given bread, who had to be educated, who had to be given health, who had to be given some sort of self-confidence by the British mentors or by Western culture imported from this foreign country or that.

Later still, another imperialist vision came from the West in the shape of communism. This vision said that India was a colonial and semi-colonial society, divided into exploiting and exploited classes, into the oppressors and the oppressed and that it was the duty of the Communist Party to liberate India from all this sloth and exploitation, this deadening of the forces of production. This was the fourth imperialist vision of India.

The cumulative effect of all these imperialist visions combining together has been rather serious, rather disastrous for us. Today the vision that prevails, particularly amongst our ruling classes, amongst the Hindu intellectuals, amongst the Hindu elite, is quite the opposite of the National Vision provided by the Swadeshi Movement, provided by our own great men.

Today we are told that Bharatavarsha is not one indivisible whole, that it is not one country. We are told that India is a subcontinent and that its division that has taken place into Afghanistan, Pakistan, Hindustan and Bangladesh is the natural outcome of various nationalities struggling for their own pieces of homeland. As a result, India can no more be claimed as its own homeland by any particular society, least of all by the Hindu society.

Then we are told that the history of this sub-continent is not the history of Hindu society, of the Hindu nation. This country is now regarded as some sort of *dharmashala* into which all sorts of invaders have poured in from the West and the East and other directions. The history of India has become the history of foreign invaders. So when you look at the teaching of history in our universities, colleges and schools, you find that there is an ancient Hindu period, you find that there is a medieval Muslim period, and you find that there is a modern British period. Now we are also informed of a contemporary period, the post-independence period, with its own architect and father.

Next we are told that Indian society is not a homogenous society. India, we are told, is multi-racial, multi-national, multi-linguistic and multi many other things. We are also told that Indian culture is not Hindu culture, that it is a composite culture made out of many cultures, indigenous and imported. It makes me laugh sometimes. When we talk of Indian music, we find that it is Hindu music. When we talk of Indian sculpture, we find that it is Hindu sculpture. When we talk of Indian architecture, we find that it is Hindu architecture except for a few minor details added by foreign invaders. Indian literature, almost ninety-nine percent of it, is Hindu literature. All this is Hindu heritage. It was the Hindus who created it, it is the Hindus who have sustained it. It is the Hindus who are still adding to it, elaborating it and expanding it. Yet, when it is pointed out that the culture of this country is Hindu culture and that the history of this culture is Hindu history, everyone seems to get annoyed. People who talk of Hindu culture are accused of being communalists.

But the strangest thing that has happened is that the religion of this country is no more Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana Dharma is now supposed to be some sort of a primitive superstition. Some people take up Vedanta and talk a lot about it. Some others take up the Gita and talk about the Gita. Some others take up and talk about other aspects of Sanatana Dharma, Yoga and so on. They acquire name and fame, write books and give lectures. But when it is pointed out that it was Sanatana Dharma which created all this spirituality, all this philosophy, all these laws, all this culture, not many people are prepared to accept it. A new religion has taken the place of Sanatana Dharma. This new religion is secularism.

We are now told that it will be through secularism that India will become a united nation, that there will be national integration on the basis of secularism. So we have

a National Integration Council. It gives instructions to the Ministry of Education that the history of India should be re-written so that Muslim invaders of this country are not regarded as foreigners, so that Islamic imperialism is not regarded as something obnoxious, as something foreign, as something which came from outside. We are now required to accept Islam as an Indian religion, as a religion which must have as much pride of place in India as her own Sanatana Dharma. The logic has not yet been extended to the so-called British period of our history. But tomorrow there may be voices which demand that the British should not be regarded as invaders and injurers because, after all, they gave us English education, English literature, hospitals, schools, colleges, roads and all sorts of modern paraphernalia.

This is the state of things that is now prevailing in this country. The National Vision which had arisen during the Swadeshi Movement, which had mobilized the masses in India and which had taken her ahead in the fight for freedom, is now more or less completely eclipsed. It is not so much eclipsed elsewhere in India as in Bengal or in Kerala or in certain other parts where English education has spread faster than in other places. This is the situation that obtains today.

Let us take secularism. It is a concept which we have imported from modern Europe. The Christian Church had created a lot of bloodshed in Europe, 100 years wars and 200 years wars. A dark night had descended over Europe with the coming of Christianity. Humanism, rationalism, universalism and all other values which are known as human values had been buried under the dead-weight of Christianity. Some people in Europe started questioning the character of Christianity, particularly the stranglehold of the Church over the State. There was a revival of humanism, rationalism and universalism due to Europe's contact with India, China and some other great ancient

civilizations. There was a struggle against the Christian Church and over a period of time the State was freed from its stranglehold. It was this struggle which gave birth to the concept of secularism in Europe. It was a very healthy concept, particularly for those countries which were suffering under the yoke of theocracy, under the inhuman theology of Christianity. This is still a very healthy concept for countries suffering under the yoke of Islam.

But in India today people prescribe secularism to Hindu society which has never known any religious conflicts, which has never known any religious strife. Recently I was traveling in the Far East and met some Buddhist monks from China. I said to them: "Buddhism came to China from outside. But you had ancient religions of your own. You had Confucianism. You had Taoism. Did Buddhism come in conflict with Confucianism, or Taoism?" They said: "No, never." There was not a single instance of conflict because Confucianism also came from the same deepest source of the spirit, because Taoism also came from the same source from which Sanatana Dharma springs, from which Jainism springs, from which Vaishnavism springs. All these are different names of the same spiritual message for mankind. I also talked to some people in Japan in order to find out if Buddhism came in conflict with Shintoism which is their ancient religion. They also said, no, the two religions never came into conflict. The two religions are co-existing in mutual harmony till today. I met a taxi driver who was quite an intelligent man. He said: "I am both a Shintoist and a Buddhist." So also in ancient Greece, in ancient Rome, in the whole ancient world, all over Asia and Europe. The world had never known any religious wars before the rise of Christianity.

Religious wars started with the coming of Christianity. They became very, very bloody with the rise of Islam. But Europe had a wave of humanism, rationalism and universalism which broke the stranglehold of Christianity

over the State. That is how the concept of secularism arose. As I have said, it was a very healthy concept in the context of Europe. As a result of it, European society has traveled so far, European science has developed, European technology has developed, and the social welfare system for the people of Europe has improved. All these things have come out of the concept of secularism.

Hindu society, however, has always been a naturally secular society. Hindu society has never known any theocratic state. You take for instance any Hindu king. You will never find a bigot who favoured this or that sect. Personally he may have belonged to Buddhism or Jainism or Vaishnavism or any other sect. But in his court, in his kingdom, all religions were equally welcome, all religions were equally patronised. In fact, it was the religious people who patronised the king rather than being patronised by him. It was not like the Archbishop of Canterbury who has to wait on the king of England, the king being the Defender of the Faith. The Hindu king had to go to rishis, munis and sadhus in order to seek their advice.

It is in such a land, in such a society that the concept of secularism has been imported from Europe. Not only that. The concept of secularism has also been turned against Hindu society. Today you know what secularism means. Whenever the word secularism is uttered you can sense an anti-Hindu animus. Secularism in India today means denunciation of Hindu society, denunciation of Hindu culture, denunciation of Hindu history. It means denunciation of everything which is Hindu. The word 'Hindu' itself has become a dirty word. In the language of secularism, Muslims are a minority, Christians are a minority. But the Hindus are a "brute" majority. This is the religion of secularism which is replacing Sanatana Dharma. This is the new vision which has replaced the vision of Sanatana Dharma, the vision of a society and a culture and a history and other things based on Sanatana Dharma.

The excesses of this secularism, its anti-Hindu animus, have gradually led to a wide-spread feeling among the Hindus that there is something seriously wrong somewhere. The so-called minorities have become more and more aggressive under the protection of this secularism. The Christian missionaries bring billions of dollars into this country from the Defence and Intelligence and other departments of the governments in Western countries. They spend this mammoth finance for building missions and churches and for making converts. The "light" of Christianity is being spread. So also Islam. Ever since petro-dollars have come into play, ever since the Arab nations have become rich, Islam in India which had got a little frightened after the partition in 1947, has re-acquired its old self-confidence of the Muslim League days. You have only to read the language press of Islam, particularly the Urdu press, to witness the wave of aggressive self-confidence on which Islamic imperialism is riding at present.

It is due to all these circumstances, due to this seeing through secularism, due to a renewed aggression from the old imperialist forces which were lying dormant for some time, that Hindu society had experienced some sort of reawakening, some sort of resurgence. We find that Vishwa Hindu Parshad is playing a leading role in consolidating this resurgence, in giving leadership to this resurgence. But I feel that this effort will not get completed, will not acquire a strong core unless the National Vision of the Swadeshi Movement days is recovered, resurrected, reaffirmed and reinterpreted in the new situation. This is what I am trying to do today in my own small measure.

The first thing we have to do to re-assert the National Vision is to proclaim to the whole world, without any fear or hesitation, that this ancient land, this Bharatavarsha is one indivisible whole and that we do not recognize its partition into Afghanistan, Pakistan, Hindustan and

Bangladesh. It has often happened in the history of many countries that certain imperialist forces have encroached upon them and have run away with some parts of their lands. We must be very clear in our minds that what are known as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh today are parts of the Hindu homeland and that we are going to reclaim them. We should say it fearlessly that the consolidation of Islamic imperialism, a thousand years of Islamic aggression against India, in the shape of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh is not going to be tolerated, that sooner or later we shall undo this division of the motherland, and that we shall reclaim our brethren who have been alienated from us by Islamic imperialism.

Some of our people are now known as Muslims, some are known as Christians. All these are our own people. We have nothing against them. But we shall not tolerate imperialism surviving in this country in the form of Islam or in the form of Christianity. Islamic imperialism has been defeated and dispersed. There is no place for Islam in India today. Christian imperialism has been defeated and dispersed. There is no place for Christianity in India today. We have to say it all in very clear terms.

The second thing which we should say very clearly and fearlessly is that the history of India is the history of Hindu society, of the Hindu nation, and that we do not recognise any Muslim or British period of this history. We do not recognise any age of Mamluks or Khaljis or Tughlaks or Lodis or Mughals. We shall instead read our history in terms of our own heroes, in terms of an age of Prithvi Raj Chauhan, an age of Rana Sanga, an age of Krishnadevaraya, an age of Rana Pratap, an age of Shivaji and so on. We shall not concede that there ever was a Muslim empire in India. We shall instead interpret that period as a long-drawn-out war of national resistance, of national liberation, in which Islamic imperialism was worsted. Similarly, we shall not recognise any British viceroys or

governor-general except as imperialist intruders. The imperialist versions of Indian history which are being taught at present in our schools and colleges have to go.

Take the case of the so-called Muslim empire in India. Within a few years of its prophet's death, Islam had conquered large chunks of Asia and Africa. But it took it 70 long years to put its first step in India, another 500 years to reach Delhi, and a few hundred years more to reach South India. Soon after, Islamic imperialism started retreating before a national struggle for liberation. It started folding up with the rise of Shivaji. So what we had was a long drawn-out war, a prolonged national struggle against Islamic imperialism. This war, this national struggle should not be described as the Muslim conquest of India or as the Muslim period of Indian history.

The third thing which we have to proclaim in order to reaffirm the National Vision is that the national culture of India is Hindu culture, the culture of Sanatana Dharma. It is a vast and variegated culture. But at the same time it is a culture which is natural to mankind. There is nothing artificial about this culture, nothing which has been constructed by the outer mind of man, nothing which has been imposed by force as is the case with the cultures of Christianity and Islam and Communism. Any culture which is not prepared to come to terms with Hindu culture, the culture of Sanatana Dharma, has to go. There is no place for any alien culture to flourish on the soil of India in the name of 'minority rights'.

The fourth thing which we have to proclaim is that Hindu society is the national society in India. This is a vast society which has permitted endless expressions of human nature, which has sanctioned all types of social traditions. Today we are accused of neglecting our so-called tribals. This is an accusation which is made against us very often. But when you read Hindu history, you find that we never interfered with the life-style of any segment of our society.

We wrote 40 Dharmashastras in order to accommodate the customs and traditions and institutions of various regions and communities. Then we wrote 4000 commentaries on the Dharmashastras adapting them to different *jatis*, to different *varnas*, to different regions. So Hindu society is a vast and complex society. Any community which is not prepared to come to terms with Hindu society has no place in India any more. We shall not permit such alien communities to call themselves minorities and claim special rights and privileges.

Finally, we have to proclaim that the only religion which Hindu society recognizes, which has a place in Bharatavarsha, is the natural spirituality of Sanatana Dharma. It is a religion which accommodates all types of human aspirations including atheism, agnosticism, materialism. What it cannot accommodate is force and fraud practised in the name of religion. Any religion which wants to flourish in India has to come to term with the spirituality of Sanatana Dharma. There is no place in India today for ideologies like Islam and Christianity which harbour imperialist ambitions.

This, then, is the Emerging National Vision. The whole of Bharatavarsha is the Hindu homeland. The history of Bharatavarsha is the history of Hindu society. The national culture of Bharatavarsha is Hindu culture. And the national religion of India is Sanatana Dharma. This is the National Vision which we have to reaffirm.

There are certain implications of this affirmation which we should hold clearly before our minds. Unless we are clear in our minds, unless we are ideologically equipped, unless we acquire knowledge about ourselves as well as about the forces against which we have to fight, the contest will be decided to our disadvantage. Several ideological aggressions have been mounted against Hindu society, against Hindu culture, against Sanatana Dharma in the past as well as in the present. There is the ideological

aggression from Christianity. There is the ideological aggression from Islam. There is the ideological aggression from Communism. We have taken a defensive posture against all these aggressions. This will not do.

Today in India, a Hindu has only one *parichaya*, only one name by which he is known. He is known as a communalist. Islamic ideology, Christian ideology, Communist ideology—all of them have made such inroads that a Hindu is being called a communalist in his own homeland. This is the ninth or the tenth wonder of the world. I do not know how many wonders there are in the world at present. But this is surely the greatest wonder of the world. This had happened because Hindus in their ignorance have recognised Islam and Christianity as religions. This recognition has to be withdrawn. This is the first implication of the Emerging National Vision.

Today, by pretending that they are religions, Christianity and Islam are claiming special rights, special privileges, special protection. Take the case of Islam. Its holy books are full of calls for crusades and mass slaughter. Its history has been blood-soaked. Its mosques have always been party offices and arsenals. Yet it pretends that it is a religion. I am not going into the deeper reasons for not regarding Islam and Christianity as religions. The simple fact that both of them divide humanity into mutually exclusive camps of believers and unbelievers, Kafirs and Momins, is sufficient to prove that they are not religions but only political ideologies. They have to be rejected outright. No matter how many libraries have been equipped in defence of these ideologies, no matter how many tons of dogmatics, polemics and apologetics have been marshalled, we have to reject them. We have to proclaim from the house-tops that we do not recognize Christianity and Islam as religions.

But we shall not acquire this courage unless we are

convinced of the truth of what we have to say. And conviction will not come to us unless we study these so-called religions in depth. I have had an opportunity to study Islam and Christianity under the guidance of Sri Ram Swarup who has a deep knowledge of their so-called scriptures and sacred traditions. There is a lot of theology in these books, there is a lot of ideology. But there is no spirituality in them. Can there be a religion without spirituality? Religion has something to do with man's spiritual quest, has something to do with man's soul, with man's deeper drives, with man's larger and loftier aspirations. But we find nothing of this sort in the books of Christianity and Islam. What we find there is political ideologies of aggression, what we find there is imperialist ambitions of conquering and converting other people by force.

The second implication of the Emerging National Vision is that Muslims and Christians who have been forced into the fold of alien ideologies, into the fold of imperialist ideologies masquerading as religion, have to be brought back to their ancestral fold. They are our own people. When we reject Islam, we do not reject Muslims. When we reject Christianity, we do not reject Christians. They are our own flesh and blood. They have to be rescued from the prison-houses of Islam and Christianity, from the dark dungeons of deadening fanaticism.

These are the implications which we should understand very clearly. Hindu society has to be ideologically equipped. It has to know its own history, its own scriptures, its own culture in depth and width, its own identity as a nation. At the same time, it has to know from the horse's mouth, from the original sources the character of Islam and Christianity, the character of Communism and the character of modern materialism which is now coming to us as American consumerism. Unless we have this knowledge, the battle will not be really joined.

The old enemies will use the old weapons over and over again so long as Hindu society remains on the defensive. They will go on calling us communalists, etc. Hindu society has been on the defensive since 1920 when the Congress took up the cause of Khilafat. Since then Islam and other alien forces have been on the offensive. Islam has been saying that it stands for monotheism while Hinduism stands for polytheism, that it stands for a casteless society while Hinduism stands for caste hierarchy, and so on. Now if we do not know the character of Hindu society, the character of Varnashrama Dharma and how this social system has been our great saviour throughout our history, we are taken in.

Very few people know that the Muslims in India have always divided their own society into three separate sections, apart from the fact that there are as many, if not more, castes among the Muslims as among the Hindu. The descendents of foreign invaders like the Arabs, the Turks and the Persians are known among the Muslims as *ashraf* which is the plural of *sharif*, which means the noble ones, the exalted ones. The converts from the higher Hindu castes like the Brahmins and Rajputs are known as *ajlaf*. And the converts from the lower Hindu castes are known as *arzal* which is the plural of *razil*, which means the ignoble, the mean. This common language of casteism among the Muslims we do not know. Therefore, when they talk of Hindu society as caste-ridden and their own society as casteless, we are taken in.

Again, take for instance this Islamic talk about monotheism. This is a monstrous idea. It is not a spiritual idea at all. It puts god above the cosmos and makes all manifestation bereft of divinity. This is a theological idea. This is an intellectual concept. But we have been trying to prove all these days that we are also monotheists. We have to know the spirituality of Sanatana Dharma as also the ideology of Islam in order to see through monotheism and to reject it as an intellectual bluff.

An ideological battle has to be waged in order to avoid the other battle, the physical battle. Societies which fail to fight an ideological battle, which refuse to repel ideological aggression, invite physical aggression sooner or later. If ideological aggression is not stopped, a society gets taken for granted and physical aggression follows. This is the law of Nature. We did not fight against the ideological aggression of the Muslim League which was later on joined by the Communist Party of India. It was the CPI which collected facts and figures and gave respectability to the ideological aggression from Islam. I know it personally because I was myself a communist at that time. And we know what happened. Physical aggression followed. The country was partitioned. Millions were rendered homeless, millions were killed.

So, if we want to save our society from physical aggression, from physical clashes, from street riots, from bloodshed, we should take up this ideological battle immediately. But we have to be equipped in order to fight this battle. We have to know our own Hindu society, our own Hindu culture, our own Hindu history, our own Sanatana Dharma. We have also to know Islam and Christianity and Communism from their own sources, from the horse's mouth. We should not have any private versions of these alien ideologies. We should know them as they are in themselves, as expounded by their own spokesmen.

We Hindus have a very bad habit, a suicidal habit, of finding in our own traditions, in our own scriptures, whatever the alien ideologies claim for themselves. We try to find Christianity in our scriptures, we try to find Islam in our scriptures, we try to find Communism in our scriptures. This is a very bad habit. We must know the enemy as he is. Otherwise the ideological battle is not really joined.

Today in India, Christianity is ideologically equipped. Over the last so many years, Christian missionaries have been studying Hindu religion, Hindu society and Hindu

culture and tearing them to bits. They know when and where to attack, when and where to retreat. They know all the strategic points. They know all the tactics. Islam has not been studying our religion or society or culture. But it knows that when it says that it stands for monotheism, that it stands for equality, that it stands for human brotherhood, the Hindu tends to run away. Whenever Islam calls the Hindu a communalist, the Hindu runs away. So far as its own ideology is concerned, Islam has a lot of centres where Islam is taught in depth and detail. A lot of finance is also available for these centers. New Islamic universities are coming up. You may have read in the newspapers that a 15 crore scheme has been made for an Islamic Cultural Centre in New Delhi. Hidayatullah has spoken about it. The money will come from the Islamic Cooperative Bank floated by the Arabs. The Government of India will also make a contribution.

But there is not a single Hindu centre worth the name in India. We have lots of ashramas and mathas and some publishing houses. We have many swamis and lots of talk about Hindu religion and Hindu culture. But there is no Hindu centre which develops Hindu scholarship, which studies the whole range of Hindu heritage, which tries to know and to make known Islam and Christianity and Communism inside out. There is no Hindu centre which can provide comparative studies and a clarity of vision and which can equip us for an ideological battle. The National Vision which is emerging has not only to be re-affirmed, it has also to be ideologically equipped.

As I come to the end of my talk today, I should like to add one more point. We should not see this ideological battle as taking place in India alone. That will narrow down our perspective. The ideological battle which is taking place in India is part of a world-wide battle. We are not alone. We also have our allies abroad. Our allies are not foreign governments and foreign financial institutions.

Our greatest ally is the indomitable and immortal human spirit, the deeper culture of the human soul. The wave of humanism, rationalism and universalism which has been sweeping over the Western world is our strongest ally. Christianity, for instance, is almost dead in the West today. They give money to the Christian missions under the mistaken impression that the missionaries are doing social service in India. But if we make it known to the West, to the people over there, that the Christian missionaries are using this money for subverting Hindu society and Hindu culture, we shall find many allies.

Islam is a hard nut to crack because Islam is still living in a world of die-hard dogmatism. Islamic lands are under a deep spell of darkness. It is very difficult to penetrate these lands physically. We can go into the homelands of Christianity. We can speak to them, we can appeal to them, we can discuss with them. Their minds have opened up. But the mind of Islam is a closed mind. It is not easy to open it up.

I have discussed this problem of Islam with Sri Ram Swarup. He says that ideas can penetrate every wall, travel everywhere. May-be we are unable to go physically into Islamic lands with our message of humanism, rationalism and universalism. But we can give a call to them to throw away their closed creed and feel free. We can invite them into the open sunshine of natural spirituality which is Sanatana Dharma. The Islamic lands are in the throes of a deep crisis. Most of their students who go to Western universities, who come to Indian universities, do not want to go back to their Islamic countries, Iran and Iraq and so on. They find the atmosphere at home suffocating. They are our allies.

So we should not see this ideological battle which is raging in India today in isolation. It is a world-wide battle. Christianity has its allies abroad. Islam has its allies abroad. So has Communism. But we also have our allies abroad.

Our allies may not have money as their allies have. Our allies may not have physical power, military power, as their allies have. But we must remember that our ally is the human spirit everywhere. We must appeal to this human spirit, seek succour from this human spirit, as we go into an ideological battle. We are bound to win.

I thank you all for giving me a patient hearing, for sparing so much of your time.