



Sanatana Dharma – A Way Forward

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Historical Perspective

In the treatise of history 'The Wonder that was India' the Australian historian Prof A.L. Basham said, "The ancient civilization of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, in that its traditions have been preserved without a break down to the present day (1)". About forty years later, after a long and thorough research, the American historians Richard L. Greaves, Robert Zaller, Phillip V. Cannistraro and Rhoades Murphy together have come to the same conclusion. In writing on ancient and modern India in their book 'Civilizations of the World – The Human Adventure' they asserted, "India's civilization is the oldest in continuous existence (2)".

According to Greaves et al 'Mesopotemian and Egyptian civilizations came to an end by Roman times and were later superseded by the Arab conquest. The present cultures of these areas have little or no connection with ancient Sumer or the time of the pharaohs, leaving India as the oldest survivor. The Indus civilization is the clearly traceable direct ancestor of subsequent Indian civilization, and the continuities are strong (3)'. Comparing the values, virtues, culture and tradition of Indian civilization, or more appropriately Hindu civilization, Prof. Basham has recorded, "Until the advent of the archaeologist, the peasant of Egypt or Iraq had no knowledge of the culture of his forefathers, and it is doubtful whether his Greek counterpart had any but the vaguest ideas about the glory of Periclean Athens. In each case there had been an almost complete break with the past. On the other hand, the earliest Europeans to visit India found a culture fully conscious of its own antiquity – a culture which indeed exaggerated that antiquity, and claimed not to have fundamentally changed for many thousand of years. To this day legends known to the humblest Indian recall the names of shadowy chieftains who lived nearly a thousand years before Christ, and the orthodox brahman in his daily worship repeats hymns composed even earlier (4)".

It is obvious there is a great deal of difference between Indian civilization and its contemporary ancient civilizations of the world such as Mesopotemian, Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, Mayan, Aztec and indeed possibly a few others. And it is this difference that enabled Indian civilization to survive not only the test of time but also, starting with the invasion of India by Alexander the Great, all military onslaughts thrust upon it from outside and their cruel and in some cases barbaric effects, while the rest of the ancient civilizations disappeared from the face of the earth. *The Indian civilization right from its very beginning is inherently resilient and it has the characteristics of evolution built into it.* All this is due to Hinduism, the religion that has been supporting and nourishing the civilization with its values and virtues, especially its philosophy, the Vedanta. It is Hinduism that has been the source of vitality of our tradition, inspiration of our culture and strength behind the continuity of our civilization.

Yet, if there is any religion that has been criticised, distorted, vilified and misinterpreted it is Hinduism. Those

who have been distorting and vilifying our religion and scriptures are still at it. The most disturbing feature of this greasily episode is that some of the so-called elites of our society are now in the camp of those engaged in destroying Hinduism and our civilization. The famous Indologist Dr. David Frawley has observed, "The elite of India suffer from a fundamental alienation from the traditions and culture of the land that would be less poignant had they been born and raised in a hostile country. The ruling elite appear to be little more than a native incarnation of the old colonial rulers. This new English-speaking aristocracy prides itself on being disconnected from the very soil and people that gave it birth (5)". The shameful nature of these so-called intellectuals is that instead of being proud of their past heritage they feel happy to be foreigners in their own country. The post-independent Indian history books do not reflect the greatness and glory of our past history, the history as described by Greaves et al and Basham. Instead they are filled with such imagined stories that attack the morale of our people and confidence of our nation. This is not the way a nation can advance with confidence in the comity of nations in the world.

History plays a very important role in the life of a nation or survival of a civilization, for it is through history can one learn about his real identity and what he represents. What is history? "Many answers have been given to this question. To most people it is undoubtedly the record of past events. But a moment's reflection will show that it is not a record of everything that has happened, whether the subject be (is) the history of mankind as a whole, or of a nation, a city, a religion or institution. History, as it is recorded by chroniclers or presented by historians, inevitably involves the selection of certain events as being especially significant among all that happened within a specific area of the past. And selection also implies criteria of interpretation by which events are considered significant (6)". Therefore, the most important aspect of history is how it is perceived and interpreted by historians. They are the people who change the course of history.

The German historian Leopold von Ranke defined the historian's task as *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. In other words the task of a historian is to describe the past 'as it really happened (7)'. In most cases history is written at least sometime after the event has taken place and the historians or chroniclers are not normally there when the event actually takes place. The definition of a historian's task given by Leopold von Ranke 'will doubtless always stand as the ideal of scientifically objective history, and as a warning against the writing of history as propaganda or apologia for some nationalist, political and religious end. But it has come to be realised that this represents an ideal that can never be wholly achieved. As already noted, history inevitably implies selection and interpretation of facts considered to be relevant. Both activities ultimately depend upon human minds, which are conditioned by many factors such as education, religion, and nationality, quite apart from personal interests and consciously conceived aims (8)'.

Aims and Objectives of Christian Missionaries

History is always written by the victors of conflict, never by its victims. It is the victors who decide what should



or should not be included in the history, what serves their interests the best. It is the same when one considers when and who wrote the history of India, be it political, social, religious or any other. When the British occupied India in addition to some scholars such as historians, archaeologists and political leaders a large number of Christian missionaries came to this country. The agenda of their mission was not the same. The scholars were aware of India's glorious past. Perhaps they came to India to educate and ascertain for themselves of that glorious record, the mission of the missionaries on the other hand was to serve the cause of their belief, i.e. to convert the heathen natives (according to their belief) of India to Christianity.

On arrival they found that the socio-political situation at the time in India was just right for their missionary activity. They found a large number of Hindus have already been converted to Islam. It was an incentive to their cause for conversion. During the Mughal Empire the universities of India, universities such as Takshashila, Nalanda, Ujjayani, Amaravati, Kashi, Balavi, etc. were all destroyed under one pretext or other. Many scriptures and almost all literatures, whether they were of history, science, philosophy or any other, were completely destroyed. There was a near absence of educational activity in the country. Prayag was renamed as Allahabad (Allah – abad, the place of Allah). Indeed, if one looks at the Indian map today it would be apparent that the fate of many cities and towns was the same as that of Prayag. As Persia was turned into Iran and Mesopotamia into Iraq, the real intention of the Mughal rulers was to turn India into another Muslim state.

It is at this time of social and political degradation the British established their colonial rule in India. The situation could not have been better not only for interfering with the political landscape of the country but also to re-orientate the social and religious life of its people. The western missionaries and scholars such as Friedrich Max Muller, Sir William Jones, General Sir Alexander Cunningham, H.H. Wilson, Sir R.E. Mortimer Wheeler and some others were very clever and highly intellectual people. They are the people who over a period of about 150 years have altered the way of our life and how we think. *Whether the history of India or interpretation of Hindu scriptures, most of what we have got today is the legacy of how they perceived our past history and interpret our scriptures.*

Let us give credit where credit is due. Unlike the Muslim invaders the British did not destroy our temples or burn our scriptures. These intellectuals, these missionaries, are the people who translated our scriptures and introduced our dharma to the West. One does not know nor can one predict with certainty whether, in course of time, without their effort, Hindu Dharma and the Vedic Philosophy would have permeated through the western world and elsewhere outside of India. The fact is that they have done it for us. While this may appear to be an act of generosity; the history, however, tells us that there was an ulterior motive behind the apparent intention of disseminating knowledge of our culture and dharma. While doing many good things, Muller's also admitted his intention to undermine Hinduism. In a letter to his wife in 1886 he wrote: "The translation of the *Veda* will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on

the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion, and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last 3000 years (9)".

It is obvious what Muller was after. As a Christian missionary he came to India with evangelical mission for his religion. He was a highly educated and intellectual person. Therefore, right from the outset he went about doing what he thought necessary to attain his goal. On 16 December 1868 he wrote a letter to the Duke of Argyll, the then Secretary of State for India in which he said, "India has been conquered once, but India must be conquered again and that second conquest should be a conquest by education (10)". It would not be appropriate to claim that all westerners involved first in learning about India and its past and then publishing their work were of the same nature and intention as that of Muller. On arrival they soon came to realise that there were virtually no recorded materials in the country. They were not familiar with the tradition and culture of India. They were born and brought up in a particular way. They were Christians and naturally influenced by the teachings of the Bible. That they would think in a particular way and interpret the Vedic teachings according to their mode of thinking is only to be expected.

Why the Vedas and Indian history must be reinterpreted

Therefore, to believe that their interpretation of the Vedas was what the Vedic seers and saints had in their minds is wholly inappropriate. *It is for this reason, if not for anything else, we must rewrite and reinterpret the Vedas and other scriptures where necessary.* Not only the Vedic teachings but also the Indian history has been distorted and twisted. The main idea used to describe the history of ancient India is 'The so-called Aryan invasion theory'. Using the concept of this idea the history of India has been depicted as a series of invasions from outside, invasions by "Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Huns, Arabs, Turks, Portuguese, British, and so on. Following this logic, it has even led to the idea that the Dravidians also originally were outsiders. The same logic has resulted in the proposition of a Dravidian migration into India from Central Asia, a few thousand years before the Aryan invasion, overrunning the original aboriginal people of the region (11)". The author of this theory invented it for two reasons. First, the idea was to prove that the Mesopotemian civilization, the civilization that is behind the inspiration of Judeo-Christian religions and culture, was the earliest in the history of the mankind. "Thereby the invasion theory has been used to try to subordinate Eastern religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism, to Western religions like Christianity and Islam, which are supposed to represent the original civilization of the world from Adam, the Biblical original man, who came from Mesopotamia (12)". Second, the Aryan invasion theory was designed to convince all the people in India that the occupation of that country by the British was similar to those of the other people, for they were all occupiers. Therefore, protest or resentment against the British rule was useless and unfair. It was an attempt to soften the anti-British feeling in the country and to continue its rule for as long possible thereby benefiting the British Empire. India was a huge source of chief labour. In fact when India became independent the British Empire was gradually fallen apart.



Therefore, it is an absolute necessity not only to interpret Sanatana Dharma in its right perspective but also to rewrite the ancient and medieval Indian history. Indeed this is the only way we can bring confidence to our nation, instil pride in our people and create peace and harmony within the country. Unfortunately we have been facing a concerted resistance from a certain number of the so-called intellectuals and historians against such a move. Who are these people? It is now more than one year since President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has written to these people namely Romila Thapar, R.S. Sharma, B.N. Mukherjee and Vidula Jaiswal to let him know if the medieval kings of India ever invaded any country outside India, so far the President has not received any answer from any of them. Therefore, how good, how able are these so-called top historians? And why can't they answer such a simple question? In reality they have never done any original scientific or archaeological research. Almost all of their work and publications are what could be termed as regurgitation of what the western authors had already done. Their work is almost similar to the way children arrange chairs before they play 'the musical chair game'. The recent discovery of two ancient cities likened to the lost city of Atlanta (13) and also that of the course of the dried river Swaraswati (14) and a few others have put an end to the Aryan invasion theory. This theory is not based on any scientific or archaeological evidence. It is plainly wrong. Yet, these so-called historical experts and authorities refuse to accept this fundamental reality. Will the British accept the account of the British history if it is written for them by others? The same goes with the Germans, the French, the Americans, and indeed with all self-respecting nations in the world. About two years ago the Chinese Government has set up a commission to rewrite China's history. It is time we asserted ourselves and started doing the same.

What Christianity and Islam have done to the World and why

But, why has our history been twisted and our dharma been distorted and still being vilified? This is the work of people belonging to two religions: Islam and Christianity. Looking at the world map one will find that at least eighty percent of the states in the world are either Christian or Muslim. Both are missionary religions. Both Muslims and Christians believe in the supremacy of their own religion over other religions and in their duty to evangelise the world in their own faith. It is this conviction, this belief, however misguided, that propels them to propagate their religion and convert other people into their own faith.

According to the Bible "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground (15)". Prof. Lynn White of the California University, commenting on religious teaching such as this, said it is a frontier mentality and it is teaching of this kind that is responsible for human conflict. The New Testament has gone even beyond this limit. It has claimed that Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me (16)". In other words man can attain salvation only by being a follower of Jesus Christ, i.e. by converting to

Christianity. And these are the basis of all missionary activities. It is most unfortunate that Christians, even those who are highly intellectual persons, do not ask simple question such as what happened to those who were born before the advent of Jesus Christ. He was born about two thousand years ago while the human race has been on this planet for at least one hundred thousand years. What about the salvation of those who were created before Jesus? These beliefs are not only wrong, they are indeed absurd. Further, many missionaries come to India and go to other countries pretending to be teachers, engineers, social workers and indeed of other professions. These people believe, for their faith and religion, even imposture is a virtue, a divine activity. This is very sad indeed.

In this respect the Koran does not lag behind. It has declared, "Praise be to Allah, Lord of Creation,.... Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom you have favoured, not of those who have incurred your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray (17)".

The Koran has classified the human race into two separate camps: *Dar-ul-Islam*, the world of Islam and *Dar-ul-Harab*, the world of the "prohibited". In other words, any one who is not a Muslim does not have any right to exist. On the other hand, the above quotation states quite categorically Allah is Lord of the whole creation. It also states Allah favours some, presumably Muslims, and is angry over others. Is not there any good human being among believers of other religions? Teachings of this nature and blind faith in them are the cause of many world conflicts, the conflicts we are facing today.

The world conflicts and problems such as crusades against Muslims, Spanish Inquisition, slave trade, almost total destruction of the Red Indians of North America and Aztecs of South America, Holocaust in the Second World War, destruction of Mesopotemian, Egyptian and Persian civilizations, Holocaust in Bangladesh in 1970, bombing of the World Trade Centre, Continuous Muslim onslaught on the sacred land of Bharat and indeed many other world tragedies are due in one way or another to the religious teachings as illustrated above, especially when they are taken to their extreme end.

Today people of almost all over the world are concerned of a possible 'conflict of civilizations'. The religions now dominating the world are Islam and Christianity albeit in different ways. Both have been expanding because of what they command their followers to do and it is natural at some point of time they will come into conflict with each other. This conflict has nothing to do with Hindu and Buddhist civilizations. No one is concerned about Hindus or Buddhists taking up sword against followers of other religions. This conflict is between the Western Civilization inspired by Christianity and the Muslim civilization. Considering what has been happening in recent years it might have already been here with us. Yet both these religions are of the same origin. All the world religions are based on beliefs that are different for different religions. The fact they are coming into conflict with each other, as they did before, clearly demonstrates that there is something wrong with the teachings and beliefs of one or the other. In reality, however, as explained above conflict is built into the teachings of both of them. Both Muslims and Christians, because of what their religions teach and their un-



flinching faith in them, will continue their attack on Sanatana Dharma and Hindu culture and tradition. Therefore, it is up to us to consider how we face this onslaught and find an appropriate answer to eliminate such a threat.

Persecution of Hindus: As Hindu we are facing many problems. There is not only attack on our dharma but also on almost every aspect of our life. A vivid description of our problems is given by Prof. T.R.N. Rao and Dr. David Frawley in their paper 'Role of Intellectuals in Sanatan Dharma'. They said, "The world mass media seldom considers any Hindu point of view. Though Hindus are the third largest religion in the world, and the largest non-biblical tradition, in many presentations of world religions Hindus are left out or denigrated as polytheists, idolaters and animists. Some universities in the West teach that Hinduism is not a religion at all but a collection of cults mainly of primitive nature. Such schools also teach that India as a nation was created by the British and was otherwise just a collection of warring states with little in common.

Though India is the largest democracy in the world and the second most populated country, it has no permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council. In events of global importance neither an Indian nor a Hindu point of view is given much consideration. In Bangladesh Hindus are under siege and frequently have their property taken from them. In Pakistan Hindus have been almost entirely eliminated. In neither country have there ever been any prominent Hindu leaders or government officials. In Fiji Hindus are routinely oppressed. In Malaysia they have to accept an inferior position, where Hindus can be converted to Islam but no Muslims can become Hindu. When Hindus work in Islamic Gulf countries Hindus have to hide their religion. Saudi Arabia requires that India send only a Muslim ambassador and India always meekly complied, bowing down to a nation with 1/20 its population! Could Saudi Arabia dare to insist on a Muslim ambassador from USA, France or China? (18)"

It may appear to be inappropriate to single out or name Christianity and Islam being the religions causing all conflicts and problems in the world. A disease can be properly treated only when the very cause of the disease is correctly identified. Therefore, it is necessary to know where exactly the trouble is coming from. Not only Hinduism and Hindus have been facing attacks from these two religions, Jews have been also under attack from them even though Judaism, the religion of the world Jews, is the precursor of both Christianity and Islam. During the last decade the ugly head of anti-Semitism has been on the increase all over Europe, especially in Germany and France. Recently attack on the Jews of France and their holy places has increased to such an extent that it is causing grave concern to many people in that country. The Israeli Prime Minister Mr. Sharon has felt so concerned for the French Jews that he has given a public call for them to migrate to Israel (19).

Economic, cultural and religious colonialism

Why are the Western nations so hell bent on continuing with missionary work? The intention is not only to propagate Christianity but also about controlling the world and to exploit its wealth for their benefit. Most of the European nations were colonialists. Once they invented gun and

gun powder, they went out to conquer countries and exploit their wealth and that is the way these states became so rich in a short period of time. Today it is not possible to colonise other countries. Therefore, they are now using other means including religion to continue with their control and power.

In the words of Prof. T.N.R. Rao and Dr. David Frawley, "Now the Western information and media culture is spreading throughout the entire world, including what is called the third world, with globalisation of the world economy. Even villages are now getting television and the other trappings of the Western modernity. India, China and Asia in general are being brought under the influence of the media world. Unfortunately, this Western media and commercial culture continues the same goal and influence as previous colonial forces, which only fifty years ago lost hold in Asia. This commercial culture seeks to supplant native and traditional cultures with a Western model, not only in terms of conveniences but in terms of thought and belief (20)". Islamic groups, having realised the power of the media, are now spending huge sums of money to convert followers of other religions to Islam.

What are the Western countries trying to propagate to the East? America is very keen to export its McDonald and coco-cola culture all over the world, the culture that has turned at least 30% of its people obese and more than 50% overweight. In the UK binge drinking at night has now become a social evil so much so that the police are spending \$3.00 billion dollars simply to maintain order in towns and cities and to treat those affected in various ways by this habit it is costing the National Health Service another \$13.00 billion dollars. The rate of violent crime has increased by 12% and the Government is constructing more prisons. In a population of about 58 millions in the UK there are more than 2.5 millions single parent families, a very significant proportion of which are young teenage girls. At least 40% of all marriages end up in divorce within the first year of the marriage. The overall divorce rate could be anything up to 70%. After divorce children become commodities or merchandise to be shared between the parents and court battle fought over who will get how much. Many of these unfortunate children end up in care homes. In Europe the situation is not as bad as it is in the UK but the problem is on the rise. This is only a small sample of what the western society is like now. Surely this is not the culture Indians should copy from the West. It is true there are some social problems in India. The solution is to reform them, not to copy the worst habits of the westerners.

As regards misinterpretation and vilification of Sanatana Dharma is concerned, instead of writing a detail account only a number of examples will be given here. For instance the Law of Karma has been depicted as fatalism. Yet it has nothing to do with such a concept. In recent time images of Hindu gods and goddesses have appeared on toilet seats, woman's underwear, shoes, etc. In India there are some missionaries who dress up as Hindu Swami so that they can easily convert tribal people and simple minded villagers into Christianity. "The worship of Shiva appeared in the New York Times as the phallic cult of the God of destruction. Krishna is portrayed in Western universities as an erotic God with questionable morals. Brahmins appear in the Western media as rich landowners oppressing their poor slave



Shudras, right out of communist propaganda stories. Reverend Pat Robertson, while in India, condemned Hindus bathing in their sacred rivers as those bathing in the sperm of Shiva (21)". The story is really endless.

Strength and vitality of Hinduism and Hindu culture

As Hindu if we do not address these issues now, if we do not explain not only to our people but also outside India what these people really are and the harm they have done to the world, we will dig our own grave. The Law of Karma demands action in a rational and constructive way to preserve our heritage, dharma and culture. In the world we are already marginalised. It is time we woke up and did our duty (dharma) for ourselves and for our future generations. Indifference toward preserving our dharma will get us nowhere. What is urgently required now is a strategy to nullify the effects of such malicious propaganda against our dharma and culture, a strategy for the way forward for our dharma and a plan to implement them.

No civilization or society advances in a linear manner. In a natural process it always goes through a series of peaks and troughs. The Hindu civilization cannot be and is not an exception to this historical fact. Over the past thousands of years many invaders came to India and the Hindu society recoiled as it had to under the circumstances. In the process it has picked up a number of undesirable and bad social prejudice and superstitions. It is only to be expected that they would be targeted by the West and its evangelical missionaries. Unlike other religions the nature of Sanatana Dharma is that it is dynamic and evolutionary. Therefore, it would not be difficult to address these social problems and rectify them according to what is required in the modern world provided we are serious about these issues and put our minds to resolving them.

The main strength of the Hindu society is Vedanta, the philosophy of the Vedas, and the spiritual nature of the society. Throughout the history of mankind Bharat has been recognised as the spiritual guru of the world. It is as true today as it has always been. Any one in the world, wherever he comes from and whatever is his religion, seeking spiritual enlightenment and divine inspiration always goes to India for spiritual guidance of a Hindu saint or swami. He does not go to Melbourne, Tokyo, Paris, Moscow, Washington D.C., Berlin, Mecca or even the Vatican. Every Hindu should be proud of such a heritage and his sacred duty is to preserve such a wonderful and proud heritage. There are two major centres of religion in the world: India and the Middle East. The latter has given birth to what is called *religion* while India's contribution to the world is *Dharma*. It is time the difference between the two is properly understood. Religion is a belief-oriented concept. Belief is static. Belief in some assertions or dictums amounts to accepting their validity without asking any questions about them. It is in reality a blind faith. There is no scope for expression of freedom. It acts like an immovable object. It does not allow advance of civilization. It naturally comes into conflict with everything that appears to contradict its injunctions. It is for these reasons it has been the source of conflict and war in the past as it is today. It is conflict and war that eliminated so many civilizations from the face of the earth. Religion is a man made phenomenon. That is why different religions have different set of beliefs

and so many religions have disappeared from the face of the earth.

Unlike religion Dharma has altogether a different concept. While religion is for man only, Dharma represents a holistic approach for all elements, both animate and inanimate, that constitute nature. It is the way of nature. The Order that Nature exhibits is Dharma. This Order is eternal. If there is anything that is divine or preordained it is Dharma. All elements of nature have been performing their dharma since the beginning of time and they will continue to do so for ever. That is why Dharma is referred to as *Apouresheya* - not of human origin. In other words it is not a man made concept. Newton is credited with the discovery of the Law of Gravitation. He could not have discovered it had it not been there in the first place. But where did the gravity come from? The origin of almost all the laws of science is the same as that of the Law of Gravitation. The existence of Dharma is similar to that of the laws of science. This is where one can see the difference between religion and dharma. While the former is always initiated by a man, the latter is of natural origin and cannot be dated. Its origin is the same as that of the universe.

Dharma, as indeed religion, plays a very significant role on the way a man leads his life. His social conduct is often determined by whether he is guided by some beliefs. Dharma is not based on a set of beliefs or a number of dogmas, nor can it be based on them. By its very nature it represents quest for freedom of the Soul. By concept it is dynamic. It changes with time as it does for different stages in the life of a man. Therefore, the dharma of a modern man is not the same as that of his primitive counterpart although there are elements that are common for both of them. It is obvious why a man following dharma behaves in a different way than someone who lives his life on beliefs and dogmas.

It is this characteristic, this liberty inherent in dharma that has given Hindus more than people of other religions freedom to explore into what divinity stands for and the purpose of the creation. The result is the ramification of Dharma into initially four denominations - *Saivism, Vaisnavism, Saktism and Smartism* - and later each of them branching out into a number of sub-denominations. This is evolution of thought, idea and philosophy that acknowledges and supports the truth that the emotional and spiritual needs of different people are different. And it caters in a comprehensive way for such needs to be realised. Religion cannot accommodate such diversity. Being a faith based on a set of beliefs, it recommends only one way of worshipping God. It is like a religious jacket that is deemed to be suitable for all its followers. It may be a simple way but it cannot satisfy the diverse spiritual needs of the followers. Yet these people continue to criticise religions other their own.

Vilification, distortion, and maligning of Hindu Dharma and culture have been going on for a very long period. Only recently we are protesting and complaining against such notorious, disgraceful and shameful campaign. Protest and complain we must do. That is unlikely to bring a stop to such actions and campaign. Those who are engaged in this kind of campaign are, under any standard, people of very low morality and ethic. It is necessary to expose them to the public at large. Unless appropriate steps are taken in this di-



rection they will continue with their notorious work. It is also necessary to take such steps as will enable us to discuss and debate these issues with them in public and make sure that they are published in both the print and electronic media. *In addition we must identify the strength and weakness of our society and what our dharma really represents and stands for.*

Causes of propaganda against Hinduism

Hindu society and Hindus suffer from many problems. For example, Christianity appears to be simple because it has given the Bible for its members. Similarly the Muslims use the Koran all over the world. But Hindus have to use many scriptures such as the four Vedas, hundreds of Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Puranas, Agamas, Tantras, Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc. Most Hindus do not know which scripture they should consult if they were to learn what Hinduism stands for, the fundamental teachings of Hinduism and how they are supposed to lead Hindu way of life. Hindu Swamis and Gurus are a source of great strength to the Hindu society. But they all interpret the Hindu scriptures in their own way. If a person listens to different Swamis he would not know which version he should follow. The situation is even more confusing to those who would like to follow Hinduism outside India.

Hinduism is not a missionary religion. Unlike Islam and Christianity, it does not have an evangelical wing to proselytise members of other religions. In Hindu society people grow with their dharma and culture, never indoctrinated in them. It is a fact most Hindus do not know what Hinduism really stands for. They see different gods and goddesses. They go along with the age old custom of worshipping God through their chosen deity or practise yoga or meditate in traditional way but never ask about the basic teachings of their dharma. This is very confusing, especially to Hindu children who are born and brought up in societies other than the Hindu society.

Although division in one form or another exists in all societies, Hindu society is the most divided one in the world. Hindus are divided not only by the caste system but also in other ways. One can observe it even in the political arena. What is even worse is that they do not take steps to rectify this problem. They see it day in day out, year in year out, yet they remain totally indifferent to the necessity of resolving this problem. They will suffer in silence but would not do anything about it. Their apathy, ambivalence and indifference toward their culture and dharma have cost them very dearly and yet there is no response whatsoever. Only recently some protests and complaints have been made against the perpetrators, even they are not as vigorous as the situation demands. This is a direct invitation to those who are determined to destroy Hinduism. They can see that there is no resistance against their attack. They have destroyed so many religions and culture because they believe they are doing it to please God. They believe if they continued with their attack a time will come when they will succeed as they had done in the past against other civilizations.

Way Forward

There may be different ways to address the problems and conflicts being caused by distortions and vilification of Hindu Dharma and culture. It should be understood unless these problems are urgently considered and addressed Hindus will always remain a weak society and they will have

only little voice, if any, in the comity of nations. There is no need to fight an aggressive battle against those who are engaged to vilify Hinduism and its culture and tradition, nor is it necessary to criticise or vilify other religions and culture. Most of the problems arising out of this complex and difficult situation can be resolved by simply reforming the Hindu society, educating Hindus the fundamental teachings of their dharma and taking such steps as will inform non-Hindus the teachings of Hinduism. Therefore, the following may be considered for discussion at the end of the formal sessions of this congress.

At the end of this World Congress an action group/committee should be formed with the following remits.

- To write a book or scripture to be called *Essentials of Sanatana Dharma* or simply *Sanatana Dharma* or any other suitable title.

- To take such steps as will bring about education of Sanatana Dharma both inside and outside India, and Hindu unity.

The book is intended to be a 'sourcebook' of Sanatana Dharma. The role that the Bible plays for the Christians it will be the same for the Hindus all over the world. In fact, if appropriately written, it may play a much wider role than either the Bible or Koran does. It is meant to provide a clear understanding of what Hinduism or Sanatana Dharma stands for, the Hindu way of life and how Hindus should worship God. *The interpretation of the scriptures should be such that any one reading it will understand how others have been distorting and wilfully misinterpreting Hindu Dharma over the years. It should also take into account of the fact that over the past thousands of years Dharma has been evolving with time. Therefore, the interpretation must reflect the need for the modern world while preserving the truth that Hindu Dharma teaches.* The teachings that the book should contain may be decided in a meeting of those who would contribute to it; however, for initial discussion the following may be considered.

Brief Hindu history, origin of Sanatana Dharma, its originator, its main teachings, Hindu way of worshipping God, why there are so many ways, explanation of symbolism, how Hindus are expected to live their lives, Hindu moral and ethical codes, Hindu society, how different denominations have come into the Hindu society, these denominations and their teachings, inter-relationship between these denominations, schools of philosophy and their practical applications, how to do puja, meditation, etc at home, Hindu Dharma and Science. The idea is that it will be a complete book for Hinduism and Hindus living all over the world.

The action committee/organisation may stand on its own or may be initiated jointly by, say, Vijnana Bharati, India Heritage Academy, International Forum for Indian Heritage and possibly others. Its membership will be open to any one, from both inside and outside India, who would like to support the project. It will have a central working group that will decide the topics to be included in the book, select appropriate people for sharing the writing of the book, allocate work to these writers, hold meetings at regular intervals to review progress and finally produce the completed work for printing and publication.

A co-ordinator should be appointed who would liaise with all members of the central committee, arrange meetings for them, inform the membership of the progress of the work, raise funds for the work, report account to the membership and the initiating institutions, and take steps for printing and publication of the book.



The book will be the most valuable source for information on Hinduism and Hindu culture. A book like this is long overdue. Hindu families do not have a text that can be used at home for learning Hinduism and following Hindu way of life. This book will fill that vacuum. It will not devalue the Vedas and other scriptures. In fact it is likely to generate more interest in them. It will also help the Hindu Swamis to teach Hinduism in a more coherent way than is normally done. It can be used by temple priests for teaching Hinduism at their temples.

The book will remove the distortion and misinterpretation being propagated, for it will address all those issues. It will be the recommended text for teaching Hinduism in schools and other appropriate institutions. It will be publicised through the internet. The book itself will be sold and distributed all over the world. If it is reasonably priced it is most likely to generate a huge demand, for no such books are in the market. It may even be put into many hotel and motel rooms for guests to browse through it or even take a keen interest in it.

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