

Satsang with Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam
Hinduism and India Today

Question

While we are seeking the Truth, our culture is being slaughtered by terrorists and overzealous missionaries. What can we do?

Answer

Our culture is under attack not because we are busy seeking the Truth, but because we are not organized. We do not have unity, and therefore, we do not speak in one voice. Many Indians do not have a value for Hinduism, and hence this lack of unity. We pride ourselves on being modern, educated and neutral Hindus, and sometimes even ridicule our own religious tradition. Factors such as vote-bank politics and one-sided coverage by the media have also helped to create a hostile environment to Hinduism in India. Unfortunately, Hindus are not aware or concerned. History has shown that India was invaded repeatedly because our people were not united.

In addition, the Hindus have neglected large sections of the society who have been exploited. All India Movement for Seva is an attempt by Pujya Swamiji to do something in that direction. It aims to make people aware that if they have some resources, then it becomes their responsibility to reach out to the underprivileged sections of the society. We tend to think that whatever we earn belongs to us, but that is not so. According to the Bhagavad Gita, others also have a share in our wealth.

Question

Maharishi Aurobindo said that India has so many people living in a *dhārmic* way praying to Īśvara. The Pope also said that India is full of divinity. If Īśvara is there, why is there so much poverty in India?

Answer

This is a question that arises all the time. Why is India what it is? When we listen to Vedanta we can see the profundity of the knowledge and the greatness of this tradition. We do not find this kind of clarity and exposition anywhere else. We do find a sentence here and there in the other traditions, but we do not find anything like this anywhere. If the tradition is so profound, why is the country like this? The Bhagavad Gita for instance, which teaches *karma*

yoga, tells us what kind of a life we should live. Then, why is there so much poverty?

Some people attribute this problem to our big population. India has the highest proportion of young people, even more than China. They are our great asset. The Indian problem is one of managing the assets properly, not one of population. When we view this issue from a population perspective, then we look at the millions of mouths to feed, but we should really understand that there are brains, hands, and legs to contribute. If they are all put to good use, what cannot happen? If people lived a life of *dharma*, then it may very well happen in the future.

The reason for poverty, in my opinion, is that people are not living a *dhārmic* way of life. If people lived a *dhārmic* way of life, a life of values, this poverty would not be there. The Bhagavad Gita teaches us values, duty, etc. We might think that we are living a life of *dharma* or values. However, it is not enough that I live a certain protected day-to-day life. I am also supposed to be responsible for other needy people. I have to reach out to others. That is my real *dharma*. *Dharma* is not merely confined to living a certain way of life. Such a life in itself is great, but more than that, a life of *dharma* involves my concern for other needy people. So if this kind of *dharma* was there in India today, and if we had the right kind of work culture, if there was responsibility, accountability, honesty, and hard work, then India would be a very prosperous country. Īśvara is very much there, that is why India survives today¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited by Malini, Chaya Raj, and KK Davey.