

# DGH was not an innocent academic event

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September 30, 2021

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The ‘Dismantling Global Hindutva’ Conference, whose very title seems menacing, held in virtual mode on Sept. 10-12, 2021, was not an innocent academic event by any yardstick. Lest there be any complacency about the organizers’ averment that they were not targeting Hinduism per se but only the BJP government’s version of Hinduism, we must look into the fine print. Even as it swore to be opposing the political agenda of the present government in India, the attack went far beyond to tarnish the image of the Hindus wherever they are in the world. There are tell-tale signs of the game plan executed by vested interests.

For one, it was convened by organizers who remained anonymous even though their Hinduphobia is writ large. The timing of the conference – starting on the day next to the 20 th anniversary of 9/11 – meant they wanted to divert the attention of people in America from the heinous act against humanity carried out by the Jihadists, and mischievously put the spotlight on the so-called excesses of Hindus in India.

Secondly, it is clear that the organizers were after the Hindus. If it were not so, there would be no need to hit out at Hindutva, which is only Hindi/Sanskrit translation of Hinduism. The faceless organizers could have thought of a different translation but failure to do so shows either their incompetence or goes to reveal their real intentions.

Again, if the sponsors of the conference were so clear about the difference, why did they talk of dismantling it globally? After all, BJP government is confined to India only. Are they irked by the growing popularity of Hinduism in the world?

Thirdly, the point that raises doubts about the avowed intentions of the organizers is that they chose only those speakers who are known for Hindu-bashing and for advocating ‘Break India’ ideology. As expected, such participants could only distort facts, as for example, with regard to the CAA to claim it as an attempt by the government to divest Muslims of citizenship rights. Other favourite themes were the hyped suppression and lynching of minorities. For record, one must not forget that there have been many incidents of lynching of Hindus as well and in greater numbers of which nobody talks.

Isn’t it a fact that thousands of Hindus were killed or driven out of Kashmir in the 1990s? Have not the districts like Kairana in UP, Mallapuram in Kerala and Mewat region of Haryana become so much radicalized that many Hindus residing there have had to leave

their hearth and home even in this so-called Hindu nation and in states ruled by BJP?

Unfortunate as these incidents are, no lynching should form political capital for any party. These are law and order problems which are encountered in every country.

The praise lavished by some speakers on the Maoist insurgency left behind footprints of the Urban Naxals. While one may not object to freedom of expression desired for an “academic” event, the fact cannot be overlooked that Maoist ideology is the perfect anti-thesis of democracy. The hobnobbing of such elements with the advocates of freedom in the American academia presents the sight of strange bed-fellows. But incongruity becomes most conspicuous when comparison is drawn between RSS and the Taliban.

This was done by one of the speakers – a minor poet, known more for her trenchant criticism of caste system in Hinduism rather than literary merit – who also went to the extent of speaking some unprintable words about Lord Rama. Surely, she could not have spoken similarly of icons of some other faith without inviting trouble for herself. It is only the liberal nature of the Hindus that such diatribe is tolerated.

There is no doubt that casteism is the Achilles’ heel of Hinduism. Despite the Hindus inheriting a liberal ethos along with the biggest corpus of spiritual knowledge in the world, and believing in the cardinal principle of oneness of mankind, the problem of casteism has persisted with a large segment of Indians who are uneducated or ill-educated. But pray, which religion is free from aberrations? Don’t we have discrimination in Islam? Just look at the plight of Hazara community in Afghanistan or the Shia in Pakistan? Among Christians, the Catholics do not see eye to eye with the Protestants. The purpose here is not to defend casteism, but at least we should not throw the baby with the bath water. The curse of ages has not fully dissolved due to the skewed politics followed all these years, but education and fair pursuit of the policy of sarva dharma sambhava (equal treatment of all religions) by the government are bringing about change.

Needless to say, enemies of India supplied the organizers enough funds and incentives. The Pakistan media was, therefore, agog with the news of this conference, gleefully running commentaries all the while. Summing up, it can be said that the Hindus have suffered humiliation for close to a thousand years and are now regaining confidence in themselves. Attempts like this conference are meant to imbue inferiority complex in them and keep them mentally colonized. These attempts need to be countered not only by the associations of American Hindus but others also.

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