Our Future in a Fast Moving World
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MY TURN

Our Future in a Fast Moving World

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I welcome this opportunity to "take my turn" and herald the advent of a new millennium in Hinduism Today. This allows me to take stock of some of the major historical events that have affected Sanatana Dharma and to anticipate what the new millennium holds for Hinduism and its adherents, both in India and beyond.

India is a sub-continent that gave birth to Hindu civilization but has been, in the last 500 years, subjected to alien rule and to thought alien to Sanatana Dharma. The price of freedom from British imperialism was the division of the sub-continent. "Secular India," the birthplace of Sanatana Dharma, is today wedged between two theocratic states. It has ceased to subscribe to the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain concept of ahimsa, and does not accept the principle that "the light is one, but the lamps are many."

However, Sanatana Dharma, the eternal dharma of the Hindus, has withstood the test of time for the last five or six millennia.

It is like the lofty Himalayas that stand firm, silent and serene, or the mighty Ganga which continues to flow unhindered. The Sanatana Dharma continues, to give spiritual strength and sustenance to every Hindu, whose faith is in God. It stands firm upon a philosophical foundation, strengthened by its language and literature, dance and drama, art and sculpture. It is sustained throughout the ages by its Vedic and Agamic practices. The ancient Vedic voice echoes: "Lead us from the unreal to the real. Lead us from darkness to light. Lead us from death to immortality." It is a voice which continues to excite the hearts and inspire the minds of millions of men and women.

However, my faith in Sanatana Dharma, as a Malaysian, is often shaken by the events that occur daily in the world around me, and the indifference of Hindus toward their cultural and religious identity. I often ask myself, "Will Sanatana Dharma be able to survive in the new millennium before us?" Besides international terrorism and religious fundamentalism, international developments are questioning our time-tested belief in dharma.

Is Sanatana Dharma equipped to confront the powerful forces of modern science and technology, which have no doubt brought progress but have, at the same time, dehumanized mankind? The modern mass media, which has brought the world closer, has effectively exploited human weaknesses, rather than its strengths. The combined forces of science, technology and media have made the Hindu quest for perfection of man (sadhana) somewhat irrelevant to present-day Hindus, who live in a rapidly changing world which leaves little time for reflection or meditation. Social ills and

crimes have assumed global dimensions. Throughout the world, moral decadence is swelling into a tidal wave difficult to stem.

Having been cut off from the roots of their ancestral religion and its values, the modern Hindu youths' future in Malaysia is becoming a cause of concern for all parents. They have begun to refer to their children as the "lost generation." Have we a remedy?

In answering these questions, the leaders of the Hindu community everywhere have an urgent duty to perform to renew our faith in Sanatana Dharma. We must join forces not only to endeavor, ensure and enlighten, but also to defend Sanatana Dharma and our Hindu heritage.

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