MY TURN
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Navigating History's Ups & Downs

Gupta, Badlu Ram There is a distinct, widely shared feeling in the country that Hinduism is going down and passing through a critical question of its very existence. It is indeed surrounded more by foes than friends all round. The dangers posed and the challenges mounted by them are quite formidable. No wonder a deep sense of frustration, cynicism and pessimism is sweeping the ranks of Hinduism today.

However, for a just and fair appraisal of the situation, we will have to approach it with an open mind. The fact of the matter is that, in spite of all the challenges the Hindu society is confronted with and the troubles and tribulations it is entangled in today, the over-all scenario is not altogether so dismal and disconcerting. There is nothing to despond for Hindus and Hinduism. Ups and downs are an inseparable, inalienable part of the game of human life and have to be taken in stride. Innumerable examples from present and past history can be cited to prove the point.

For instance, there was a time, not very long ago, when England was considered the most powerful country in the world, so much so that the sun did not set in the British empire. Mark the vicissitudes of life - today its writ does not run beyond the frontiers of its own land. It has no leverage left in the international arena. For another, the fate that befell and the plight that overtook the Jews in the accursed concentration camps and gas chambers of Hitler would make anybody's hair stand on end. It is not very old history. But today Israel, the homeland of the self-same Jews, is the awe and envy of the whole world.

We did have our heyday in the past when the frontiers of Bharat included Afghanistan in its territory in the west and Malaysia and Indonesia in its jurisdiction in the cast. The present, too, is not without its compensations.

The West, by and large, appears to be impressed and inspired by the Hindu way of life, which has caught the imagination of innumerable people there. Oppressed and disillusioned with the philosophy of stark materialism, millions of people in England, America, Europe and elsewhere are turning to Hinduism for relief and respite. Which other religion in the world is so emphatic, forthright and earnest in the enunciation and implementation of these most cherished values and ideals of a civilized society?

The usual tendency to equate Hindu Dharma with other religions like Islam and Christianity, in the name of Sarva Dharma Sambhava, "all religions are equal," must be deprecated by all manner of means. Hinduism, which not only preaches universal love and brotherhood, an intense spirit of tolerance and accommodation and perfect catholicity of mind, cannot be bracketed with Islam and Christianity. They stand for total self-aggrandizement and have spread mostly through sword and fire. History bears ample testimony to the carnage perpetrated and havoc wrought by them.

Hindu Dharma is essentially and basically Manav Dharma, which is meant for the whole human race and not for any particular class of people or any specific geographical region. Its basic tenets, which invariably have harmonizing and stabilizing effect on life, have a distinct universal, human ring about them. Hindu scriptures possess the unique, unrivaled distinction of abounding in and highlighting such lofty tenets. The world needs the influence of the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita.