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[Home](#) » [Tiffin](#) » Two Visions For India

Two Visions For India

What kind of India do we want? Alok Sheel pens a ballad on two visions.



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*Two different visions for India there be,
First Tagore, Nehru, Ambedkar, Gandhi;
For the second vision the reader may,
Turn to Savarkar, Golwalkar, Godse.*

*The universalist poet Tagore,
Did all narrow domestic walls abhor;
Independence for him meant liberty,
Not just freedom from foreign tyranny.*

*And for him liberty could never be,
Built on the sands of social slavery;
For tyranny could be quite elastic,
Foreign now, and afterword domestic.*

Ambedkar even more relentlessly,
Strove hard to build an equal society;
Caste hierarchies would not go on their own,
So he wanted safeguards written in stone.

Gandhi through civil disobedience,
Led the country to independence;
A person the world does still admire,
For shaking the mighty British Empire.

He sought to unite and ease growing hate,
Amongst Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian faith;
Unyielding on non-violence in strife,
For unity, love and peace gave his life.

Nehru spent years of his life in prison,
Fought in tandem with Gandhi for freedom;
Rational, forward-looking and secular,
A vision to Tagore quite similar.

Among these thinkers some differences be,
But with civilizational unity;
All were of revolutionary bent,
Drawing from the modern Enlightenment.

There is really no need to look further,
Than to the text and the basic structure,
Of the Republic's own Constitution,
To understand clearly the first vision.

In it a Union of States you can see,
With social and regional diversity;
Assured rights, individual liberty,
Social and religious equality.

The second vision bows to hierarchy,
Where there is no room for equality;
Always right and above all the Leader,
No natural rights, but duty and order.

A unitary vision not federal,
The Centre reigns supreme, and States vassal;
Where there be no room for democracy,
Or Constitutional secularity.

It brooks no diversity, for you find,
The nation is by religion defined;
The present is in some golden past recast,
And hate and bigotry other creeds blast.

Its nationalism far removed you see,
From the vision of Tagore and Gandhi;
It seeks not to include and liberate,
But to divide society and enslave.

Here no forward-looking vision there be,
For quest for revival of past you see;
A distortion of reality for,
You cannot revive what has gone before.

Its path to political victory,
Lies through disrupting social harmony;
To reopen wounds healed by history,
And revive old divides in society.

Ideas amongst these thinkers can vary,
But vision Counter-revolutionary;
Backward looking, they all find abhorrent,
Values of the modern enlightenment.

Savarkar did not in the British see,
But in Muslims, Christians the enemy;
Non-violence as Hindu weakness viewed,
Deception and rape with virtue imbued.

*Golwalkar wanted non-Hindus to be,
Treated like Jews in Nazi Germany;
And Hindu society governed strictly,
By laws laid down in the Manusmriti.*

*They did not stand with Bose, Nehru, Gandhi,
In the struggle for Indian liberty;
They sided with the imperial masters,
Against some imaginary traitors.*

*Reminiscent is this toxic discourse,
Of Europe between the two big World Wars;
When fascism and Nazism ruled,
With tragedy of immense magnitude.*

*The first vision of peace and harmony,
After some struggle gained ascendancy;
For Godse's brutal murder of Gandhi,
Eclipsed for a while hate and bigotry.*

*But from the year two thousand and fourteen,
A new order in the country was seen;
This was for India the second vision,
Ushered through the dog whistle Achhe Din.*

*Plural Gandhian Nehruvian ideas undone,
Gave way to One Nation, One Religion;
A fascistic creed that seeks dominance,
Through entreaties, bribes, deception, violence.*

*Where the ballot box and tainted money,
Slowly tightens the noose on democracy;
Where order through institutional control,
Slowly strangulates the Constitution's soul.*

*Dear Reader the question is finally,
What kind of India do you wish to see?
For this ballad is not just poetry,
Embedded are lessons of History.*

*India a nation of nations for long,
Those that have got their Indian history wrong,
Must know when rulers federalism did breach,
Large empires collapsed through overreach.*

*For centuries before Tagore, Gandhi,
Common people lived with Sufi, Bhakti;
The British divided the faiths to rule,
And modern tyrants have sharpened this tool.*

*British rule they said was necessary,
For warring faiths could not live peacefully;
The State now beguiles the majority,
By training guns on the minority.*

*Politics based on hate and bigotry,
Once led to partition of the country;
Those who wish to tread the same path again,
Must know consequences will be the same.*

*Hatred and bigotry end but in grief,
Their dispensations are brutal but brief;
What we see when we look through history's lens,
Is tyrants always get their comeuppance.*

*Imperial or homegrown, tyranny
Will never all by itself go you will see;
To win back hard-fought liberty people
Need to wage a second freedom struggle.*

EDITOR'S CHOICE