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## Two Visions For India

By: Alok Sheel

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

*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.*