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STAFF REPORTER

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUGUST 08, 2018 01:07 IST

UPDATED: AUGUST 08, 2018 01:07 IST

Swami Agnivesh delivers 17th N. Narendran memorial lecture

All violence in recent times has got State patronage, Swami Agnivesh has said.

He was delivering the 17th N. Narendran memorial lecture on ‘Tolerance, plurality, and respect for dissent’ here on Tuesday.

Swami Agnivesh alleged an attack on freedom of speech and right to dissent under the Modi government. Politicians and the administration were in a league, and deliberately promoting murder and violence. Most of the killings in the name of cow protection and child lifting occurred in Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled States, he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a Sangha Pracharak who had experimented with his ‘model’ in Gujarat, was now the Prime Minister of the country. All key posts in administration and the academia were being filled with Sangha Pracharaks. “It is reprehensible. We are all victims of the vicious hatred campaign of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Thousands are being poisoned by their narrow nationalism,” Swami Agnivesh said.

Expressing disappointment with the Congress and Left parties’ response to the BJP and the RSS, he said their failure to work together would bring the BJP back to power. “The response has to be political.”

Urging everyone to speak up, he said this was a time of reckoning, and mere condemnation of violence was not enough. “Let us speak truth to power. Hatred and violence should not be countered with more of it. All forces of social justice – the poor, women, minorities, and Adivasis – should forge a deep alliance and throw these people out.”

He called for carrying forward the legacy of freedom of speech, doubt, debate, and dissent, as taught by Swami Dayananda.

Refutes claims

Refuting the claims of Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das that the State authorities had no knowledge of his visit to Jharkhand last month, Swami Agnivesh read out from copies of letters written to Mr. Das and the State Governor, informing them about his visit to take part in an Adivas conference at Pakur, and desire to meet them both during the visit. He heard back from the Governor's office but not from the Chief Minister's office.



“If the Chief Minister and the local administration were in the dark about the visit, how did the attackers know the place and time where I spoke,” he asked.

Adivasis, he said, were paying the highest price for development. The Jharkhand government had signed MoUs with big corporates, handing over to them 3.5 lakh acres of mineral-rich land belonging to Adivasis. “Adivasis are being cheated and thrown out of their land. A Planning Commission report has said they are being displaced six times over.”



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