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• <https://www.hindustantimes.com/pune-news/swami-agnivesh-challenges-rss-chief-to-a-debate-on-hinduism/story-TOesrkqTXgvbBtTIUTbG1J.html>

## Swami Agnivesh challenges RSS chief to a debate on ‘Hinduism’

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Swami Agnivesh was in Pune to attend a state level convention on religious terrorism and intolerance. (Rahul Raut/HT PHOTO)

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Social activist Swami Agnivesh has made an “open challenge” to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat to openly discuss ‘Hinduism’ in a

debate on Vedas and Upanishads with him. Swami Agnivesh was in Pune to attend a state level convention on religious terrorism and intolerance.

Speaking at the second World Hindu Congress in Chicago, United States, the RSS chief on Friday had said Hindus should unite. “If a lion is alone, wild dogs can invade and destroy the lion,” Bhagwat had said.

Reacting to Bhagwat’s remarks, Agnivesh said, “They (RSS) are deliberately doing this to polarise Hindu vote. Even they do not know how deep-rooted Hindu religion is. I challenge him for an open debate on ‘Hinduism’ based on Vedas and Upanishads,” said Agnivesh, who was recently assaulted when he was on his way to pay tribute to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Delivering his speech, Agnivesh slammed the Modi government on the issue of increasing intolerance in the country. “I was one of the victims of increasing intolerance and mob lynching in country. Even after 20 days to the assault on me, government has failed to arrest anyone which clearly indicates that the attack was ‘state-sponsored’,” he said.

Agnivesh alleged that the attackers called him a “traitor”. “To criticise government policies is now become a seditious crime. If such things continued, then BJP will not get more than 150 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections,” said Agnivesh.

Addressing the audience at a convention, Agnivesh emphasised on the 3D’s: Doubt, Debate and Dissent. Elaborating it, he said, “To ask a question and debate over an issue is our right. Recently, the Supreme Court told that, dissent is safety wall of democracy. Government should not ignore these 3D’s.

A day before, few right wings outfits were opposed him and threatened to spoil state level convention organised by andhashraddha nirmoolan samiti. Hence police has deployed heavy police force at Sane Guruji Smarak.