

**The Mission has not Changed**  
**Address to Hindu Samhati**  
**14 February 2015**  
**Kolkata, West Bengal, India**  
**Dr. Richard L. Benkin**

Nomeshkar. Donyevaad Sri Tapan Ghosh. Dhonyevaad Hindu Samhati.

And now I will speak in a language of foreigners because I am a foreigner. My name is Dr. Richard Benkin from the United States. I am here today because I am trying to save the lives of Hindus in Bangladesh.

In 1943, the Americans and British met on the island of Bermuda to decide how to stop the Nazis' murder of European Jews. For years, they said, "We know nothing. We don't know of anything bad happening to Jews in Europe. *Mithya*. They could not maintain that lie any more. The evidence was clear, and they had to do something about it. Or so we thought. The outcome of the Bermuda conference was cowardice. Neither did anything to stop the slaughter.

Sound familiar? It should.

In 1994, ½ million to one million Tutsis were murdered by their Hutu neighbors in the Rwandan Genocide. For at least two years, many say more, the signs were there and so were atrocities. Yet, those nations that could have done something about it claimed ignorance. “We know nothing. We know of nothing happening in wanda.” *Mithya!* Former US President Bill Clinton believes that he could have saved at least a third of the people killed if he acted when he should have.

Sound familiar? It should.

Last year, I sat in on several meetings between westerners and the Yazidi community—the only non-Abrahamic religion left in the Middle East. It shares a lot of things with Hinduism, and like Hindus, Yazidis face atrocities for their faith. The Islamic State (ISIS) is committing horror upon horror on them and has made clear its intention to wipe them out. Everyone agreed that we had to do something, but no one has. The Yazidis are no safer today than they were before those meetings.

One meeting involved a Member of the United States Congress, and afterwards I said, “Everything that is happening to the Yazidi, is

happening to the Bangladeshi Hindus, only it's happening to the Yazidi all at once while it has been happening to Hindus in Bangladesh steadily and less dramatically for decades. Women gang raped, made sex slaves, and held prisoner in a life devoted to churning out Muslim babies; women and children abducted and forcibly converted. In the Middle East and next door in Bangladesh, it is a deliberate attack on the gene pool in order to wipe out the infidel.

Jews, Tutsis, and now Yazidis learned—as did so many others—that they cannot depend upon powerful nations to save them. Individuals like me might have a role to play; but in the end, only the victims can defend themselves. ***We—every one of us—are responsible for stopping the ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Bangladesh—or we are responsible for letting it happen.*** That is our choice here today.

For decades the supposed guardians of human rights have denied that anything bad is happening to Hindus in Bangladesh. It's that same cowardice we have seen so many times before, that same cowardice that has caused millions of deaths. Their denials also come from their need to cling ferociously to the simple-minded fiction that Bangladesh is a moderate country. But:

- Would a moderate country try to exterminate its non-Muslim population?
- Would the Prime Minister of a moderate country admit that it has “anti-minority laws,” something Sheikh Hasina did in 2009, then do nothing to repeal them?
- Would a moderate country arrest authors and journalists for blasphemy and threaten their lives?
- Would a moderate country allow human rights activists and journalists to be attacked and do nothing about it; or as in my case, do more to stop me from entering the country than it does to keep its Hindu citizens safe?

My friends, I present to you the not-at-all moderate Bangladesh, which now threatens Hindus in *West Bengal*, too. You know that its Islamist party, *Jamaat e-Islami*, has an office right here in Kolkata, where it spews its venom with no interference from the government?

So, do not expect help from the international community and realize that Bangladesh will never change simply because it is the right thing to do. Let’s also drop the fiction that Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League are any better for Hindus than Khalada Zia and the BNP. They

are two sides of the same vile coin, and neither has done anything to stop the slaughter.

Where does that leave us? Well, it's not all bad news. In fact, we're closer to a solution than ever before. First, you finally have a strong government in New Delhi that is willing to do something. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has told refugees that India will welcome them rather than abuse them as so often happened under the previous government. Secondly, others are taking notice as well. For instance, the International Commission of Jurists, a European based organization, has formally urged the Bangladeshi government to take "long overdue" action on attacks against lawyer and human rights activist Rabindra Ghosh for his work in protecting Hindus in Bangladesh. The ICJ referred to "a general erosion of the rule of law" in Bangladesh and called out the government for allowing regular attacks on human rights activists.

In the United States, more Senators and Members of Congress are becoming concerned about the Bangladeshi Hindus and are calling for public hearings that could lead to trade and other sanctions. And in May, expect the US Commission on International Religious Freedom's annual report to mark the first time that the US government formally

recognizes the persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh and the government's role in it.

Our job is to make sure this awareness is not as sterile as the awareness that did not stop the deaths of European Jews, Rwandan Tutsis, and Yazidis in the Middle East. I am asking today that Sri Tapan Ghosh and Hindu Samhati work with me to mobilize its large group of Indian citizens—that's you—to exercise their rights under the law to petition their elected leaders in New Delhi and Kolkata to take responsible action to stop the ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Bangladesh. Raise the issue continuously in the ongoing border talks with Bangladesh; demand before the SAARC and other international bodies that Bangladesh face sanctions; petition the UN to ban Bangladesh from peacekeeping missions if it does not change its vile ways; and work with the United States to replace Bangladesh with India as its major source of imported garments.

What is your choice?

- Are you with me? [wait]
- Are you with me? [wait]
- Are you with me? [wait]

Dhonyevaad.