

Samartha Bharat Parva Swami Vivekananda Jayanti

Dear sisters and brothers

Saprem Namaskar

We celebrate Samarth Bharat Parva from 25 December to 12 January. Swami Vivekananda had started his three days meditation at the mid-sea rock in Kanyakumari on 25 December. His historic meditation was to know his role for the regeneration of Bharat. Therefore, we celebrate Samarth Bharat Parva starting from 25th December and it culminates on 12th January- the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

At the times of Swami Vivekananda, India was in such a pathetic condition that only a visionary like him could have seen her rising again. It is easier to be proud of your country when everything is going on well. But when there is an all-around poverty, when country is under foreign rule without any sign of freedom, society divided in many communities and regional pride and prejudices, educated looking down upon its own country and praising the rulers, it is difficult to see what is good in it. At the best in such times some people may love their motherland because it is their motherland but to see her potential is difficult. But Swami Vivekananda not only loved the country but believed in the destiny of India, and brought back her confidence in herself. How did he do it?

Generally, we see what is happening but fail to see the intrinsic worth of anything. If we also see only the apparent variety then we cannot feel the strength of large India united in her vision and values. A spiritual approach to the problem, i.e. seeing beyond the apparent degradation, beyond the apparent unconnectedness, it can give real insight. Swami Vivekananda saw the Oneness of India and stressed on it. He focused on the unifying principles - common basis - of the varied communities with their apparently diverse traditions and customs. He stressed on Oneness and inherent strength. At Lahore, in his speech "Common bases of Hinduism" he gives us those unifying principles. Generally, the perceived dilemma is that if we strive to have unity, then diversity is destroyed, thus, then the communities lose their identities. This is what Christianity has done all over the world. In enforcing the uniformity. Many communities lost, their traditions. Communities without their identity become rootless and resort to violence.

But then, if only the diversity is emphasized then the communities start warring with each other. We have to protect the identity of all the communities but at the same time we cannot have the warring communities hating each other intensely. For this, the approach has to be to see the unifying principles and also cherish the diversity. Stressing on the common principles of Hindu Dharma and also different expressions of it in various communities is the integral approach. In this approach, the identity of each community is protected at the same time integrated society emerges as the strong entity to fulfil its destined role. This is possible only

in vision of Oneness. When one knows that the other is only an expression of my own inner being, then one ceases to be wary of diverse traditions, diverse practices. In fact, the diversity is protected only in having the world view of oneness.

Ultimately each living or a civilization in the creation has something to contribute for the further unfoldment of the divinity. This is what Swami Vivekananda explained to us. Swami Vivekananda said, "Each nation has a message to deliver, a destiny to fulfil, a mission to accomplish."

If a nation is awakened to its mission, then to fulfil that, its existence becomes meaningful, it gets a point of reference in understanding the happenings and the ideologies in the world. India has to give this vision of Oneness to the world, a society, which is sustainable, based on the fact of inter-connectedness and inter-dependence of the existence. All those who with their exclusive approach are opposed to this vision of Oneness, then it becomes the obstacles in the path of national mission. India's fighting spirit itself was impaired because we had stopped identifying enemy - the Asuric forces. Swami Vivekananda by awakening us to our national mission indirectly also gave us the criteria for identifying the enemy. He had said that if Hindu converts to other religion, it is not one Hindu less but one enemy more.

India does not have the agenda of ruling or dominating over the world. Her mission is to guide the world in creating an ideal social order, a society which is interconnected and therefore caring for each other, a society where human beings are aware of their innate divine nature and strive to realize that. But to give such noble message, India needs to be strong and successful civilization. No one would listen to the message of a weakling however noble may be the message. For the good of the world India has to be a strong and successful country. Today there are indications that our country is coming up. It is becoming an economical power but also there are indications that the nation is not owning its heritage and mission. Will the destiny of the India, an emerging super power be in the hands of those who cherish India, and her Dharma? Thus, only strong and successful country does not make India Samarth - capable to fulfil her mission. She also has to be aware, proud and purposeful of her identity - her Sanatana Dharma. This is also another dimension that we have to keep in our celebrations.

In Swamiji's life we see that he made it a mission of his life to awaken the nation to her glory and the destiny. For that he underwent hunger, hurts and humiliations in America. As he had to represent Hindu Dharma, he did not limit himself to any sect or path but gave the unifying principles of Hindu Dharma. He could rise above even his total devotion to Sri Ramakrishna while giving the message of Hindu Dharma. He rather understood that devotion to Sri Ramakrishna does not mean only proclaiming his name to all but spreading his teachings without even telling his name to others if that enhances the acceptance. When ultimately in the Parliament of Religions he got unprecedented acceptance, he also kept away all the temptations and remained steadfast on his path. When he returned to India, he dedicated his name and popularity again for awakening India and not to project himself. For India, he also

gave the message of do or die. Applying the ancient vision of seeing Ishvara everywhere he stressed on divinity of man, and the aim of life as the manifestation of our innate divinity. He also emphasized to see the living God. All these dimensions of the life of Swami Vivekananda we can focus in this year's 19 days long celebration.

We can contact as many colleges as possible with the CD/PPP show telling about greatness of India, her mission and for that how we should mould our life. We can also take photos or print outs of this and put up exhibitions. There can be a quiz organized on the exhibition. We have to focus on our culture during these celebrations. For that we can have either competitions or such programs which would increase the knowledge and also insight in our culture. Earlier we had brought out a CD, the same CD can be updated and used or totally new CD could be prepared. Whatever is prepared if it is shared with Bhanuji or me, it can be shared on with all branches. The IT Team is working on it and shortly it would reach you all.

We can focus attention during these celebrations also on our traditional art forms, games. If this is properly linked with 1 January - the Kalpataru Day then we can take away the attention from the vulgar way of celebration of New year day, which is not our new year in any case. The very birth of Sri Ramakrishna was for Hindu Dharma and Indian society. Thus, Sri Ramakrishna is our Kalpataru, our society and our culture is our Kalpataru.

This time, during 25 Dec to 12 Jan there are NVPS as well as many other camps. During those camps there should be Bharatmata poojan and singing of full Vande Mataram everyday. The celebration of Swami Vivekananda Jayanti should be as grand and as creative as possible.

With warm regards

Yours sincerely

Nivedita