

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR  
OF TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE CELEBRATION OF  
125<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S HISTORIC SPEECH IN  
THE WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS AT CHICAGO AT  
VIDYALAYA G.K.D AUDITORIUM, COIMBATORE ON 11.09.2018 AT 3.45 P.M**

**Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam**

**Swami Atmapriyananda,**

Vice Chancellor,  
Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and  
Research Institute

**Dr Chandra Bhushan Sharma,**

Chairman,  
National Institute of Open schooling,  
Autonomous Body under MHRD, Government of India

**Swami Garishthananda,**

Secretary,  
Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya,

**Swami Nirmaleshnanda,**

Assistant Secretary,  
Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

It is a privilege and honour for me to be here to address this August gathering on the historic occasion of the Inaugural function of 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of Swami Vivekanand's memorable Speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Swami Vivekanand is regarded as a spiritual luminary and an intuitive thinker, who spread the message of inter religious harmony and tolerance. At the same time he is also admired for his invaluable contribution in instilling a sense of patriotism and pride in the mother land among the Indian people. It was Swamiji's message on the cultural unity of India which freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi and Subramaniya Bharati espoused in later years. Swami Vivekananda was also a bridge between modernity and tradition, between science and religion and between the old and the young. He visualized that India must become dynamic in all spheres of human activity and spiritualize the life of her own children as well as of all mankind. It was God's will, he felt that he must devote himself to bring about this change.

His speech at the parliament of Religions of Chicago on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1893 reveals the multifaceted genius of his personality. When he was asked to speak, he prayed to goddess Saraswathy and felt a new energy coursing through his body. His speech echoed the Soul of India, the sayings of the Rishis, and the voice of Sri Ramakrishna. It was like the mouthpiece of the resurgent Time spirit"

He began his speech with the salutation, "Sisters and brothers of America". To these words he got a standing ovation from a crowd of seven thousand, which lasted for two minutes.

When silence was restored he began his address. He greeted the youngest of the nations on behalf of "the most ancient order of monks in the world, the Vedic order of sannyasins, a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance."

He then went on to say the following which I quote "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.

We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: "As the different streams having their sources in different paths all mingle their waters in the sea so different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: "Whosoever comes to Me. through whatsoever form, I reach him.

Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."

At the concluding session of the parliament of Religions on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1893 he said and I quote "The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant. It develops after the law of its own growth, assimilates the air, the earth, and the water, converts them into plant substance, and grows into a plant."

Similar is the case with religion. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.

Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance: "Help and not fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."

About the address Romain Rolland, a Nobel Prize awardee and historian, wrote: "Swami Vivekananda's strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his rich deep voice enthralled the vast audience. The thought of this warrior prophet of India left a deep mark upon the United States."

Swami Vivekananda's teachings have been a source of inspiration for millions of people. His greatness lay in his ability to lead from the front. Those were the times when the whole of India was reeling under the onslaught of British imperialism. Swamiji preached to the young and old to maintain one's own dignity, to be bold and to be strong. He said strength is life and weakness is death. He eloquently propounded that you cannot believe in God unless you learn to believe in yourself. One another excellent message of Swamiji to Indians who were

afraid, cautious and weak was “take risks in life, if you succeed you can lead, if you fail you can guide”. He called upon Indians to arise, awake and stop not until the goal is reached.

The vision of Swamy Vivekananda went beyond religion. He engaged himself with the problems of day to day life like poverty, slavery, education and of arousing the national consciousness. Swamiji believed that misery and poverty can be eliminated only through education.

The Ramakrishna Vidyalaya in Coimbatore which is a part of the Ramakrishna Mission is known for imparting education particularly to satisfy the needs of the deprived and differently-abled students.

What started in 1930, with an investment of Rs. 5.75 and with one boy on its rolls, has now grown into as a vast educational and spiritual centre with around twenty wings.

It has a strength of 8000 students and offers facilities for education ranging from pre-school to doctoral levels.

Nation building is a long and arduous task and it is important that honesty, transparency, selfless service and total devotion and dedication towards the nation become watchwords in this tremendous effort.

No nation has become great without a patriotic spirit among its people. No nation has become great if the common people are not provided with opportunities for education,

employment and enterprise in a honest and transparent manner. No nation has become great unless the poor and downtrodden are served by the better endowed people with a sense of brotherhood and selflessness. It is therefore important for us to inculcate the values of honesty and transparency and devotion to the nation in our youth.

I am happy to see that the Vidyalaya is organizing year-long celebrations this year with the objective of encouraging students to follow Swami Vivekananda's ideals, guiding them to realize their inherent divinity and potential, and steering them towards human excellence and enlightened citizenship. Many more events are proposed to be held in the course of the next 12 months. May God give them the strength to accomplish all this with zeal and a sense of purpose.

The function is taking place at a historic moment and I am sure that this is going to be the beginning of great things to come. I wish everybody associated with the name of Swami Vivekananda, success and brightness in their lives and congratulate the Ramakrishna Vidyalaya for having organized this function. May success visit them in all their endeavours.

Nandri            Vanakkam

Jai Hind....