

Dear Sisters and brothers

Saprem Namaskar

This year Gurupurnima comes on 3rd July. Ashadhi Purnima is the day on which Sri Vedavyasa was born. He edited the Vedas and established the Guru tradition for protecting our traditional knowledge. Therefore, Ashadhi Purnima is called as Gurupurnima.

Bharat is a **Devanirmitam Desham and Rishinirmitam Rashtram**. This beautiful land of Bharat is the creation, gift of God. India is a land of plenty of sun and rain, of rich diversities, various types of flora, fauna and natural resources. It has well-defined boundaries with mountain ranges in the north and sea on the other three sides. Really it is a Devanirmitam Desham. In such a land how man should live a meaningful and purposeful life was discovered by the Rishis. A continuous, unbroken tradition of the Rishis nurtured the way of life based on the vision of Oneness. We can say that India is a nation nurtured by the Rishis by their penance; therefore this land has become an immortal land whose purpose is to guide the world in the realms of spirituality. This is possible only if we are able to understand the vision of our Rishis and also make ourselves worthy of translating it into reality. That is where the concept of Rishiyagna comes. The festival of Gurupurnima is thus the festival of remembering the glorious tradition of the Rishis and also resolving ourselves to carry forward their work.

Now how can we carry forward the work of Rishis? It is said **Sivo Bhutva Shivam Yajet** – To worship Siva, be like siva. Similarly to carry forward the work of Rishis we have to be Rishis. What does it mean of becoming a Rishi? Retiring to the forest? Not at all, as we know that the Rishis like Vashishtha, Vishwamitra, Atri, Agastya, Vyasa, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya etc ceaselessly worked for the establishment of Dharma. Swami Vivekananda tells us what does it mean to be a Rishi, *“If there have been sages and Rishis in the past, be sure that there will be many now. If there have been Vyasas and Valmikis and Shankaracharyas in ancient times, why may not each one of you become a Shankaracharya? This is another point of our religion that you must always remember, that in all other scriptures inspiration is quoted as their authority, but this inspiration is limited to a very few persons, and through them the truth came to the masses, and we have all to obey them. Truth came to Jesus of Nazareth, and we must all obey him. But the truth came to the Rishis of India -- the Mantra - drashtas, the seers of thought -- and will come to all Rishis in the future, not to talkers, not to book - swallowers, not to scholars, not to philologists, but to seers of thought. The Self is not to be reached by too much talking, not even by the highest intellects, not even by the study of the scriptures. The scriptures themselves say so. Do you find in any other scripture such a bold assertion as that -- not even by the study of the Vedas will you reach the Atman? **You must open your heart.** Religion is not going to church, or putting marks on the forehead, or dressing in a peculiar fashion; you may paint yourselves in all the colours of the rainbow, but if the heart has not been opened, if you have not realised God, it is all vain. If one has the colour of the heart, he does not want any external colour. That is the true religious realisation. We must not forget that colours and all these things are good so far as they help; so far they are all welcome. But they are apt to degenerate and instead of helping they retard, and a man identifies religion with externalities. Going to the temple becomes tantamount to spiritual life. Giving something to a priest becomes tantamount to religious life. These are dangerous and pernicious, and should be at once checked.”*

Swamiji has put it very simply that being a Rishi means **opening out of a heart, to have a large heart**. The good of others, the good of nation becomes the main passion. Selfishness and ‘I and my’ has no place in Rishihood. Ramanujacharya to give the mahamantra to the whole world did not bother even about his death. Vashishtha told Dasharatha, “Hand over Rama to Vishwamitra. It is the great fortune of yours and Rama’s that this exalted Vishwamitra is asking for Rama. He can teach many

divine weapons to Srirama.” Imagine, how great must be the heart of Vashishtha that he was extolling in the court of Dasharatha about that Vishwamitra who had killed all his sons in the past. But Vashishtha did not keep that grudge any more in his heart. He only saw that for the destruction of Ravana, and for the establishment of Dharma, Rama needs to be equipped well and Vishwamitra could do that. Agastya Rishi had done penance all his life for the making an arrow with which Ravana could be killed. He handed over that arrow to Rama. No credit was sought for that, no name was longed for by Agastya. That is being the Rishi. When we are working for our country, as we want to bring in more and more persons for this work, we need to have a large heart. Seeking and hankering after name and fame, keeping in mind the grudges from the past will not make us capable of doing Rishikarya. The celebration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda is going to be an opportunity for us to contact more persons and to motivate them to work for nation. Unless our heart burns with the fire for the country we cannot light the lamp in the heart of others. To develop them as good Karyakartas, our hearts would have to be large enough. We have to be the Rishis to do this Rishikarya.

Swamiji further says, *“They did great work in the past, but we must do greater work than they. They had hundreds of Rishis in ancient India. We will have millions -- we are going to have, and the sooner every one of you believes in this, the better for India and the better for the world. Whatever you believe, that you will be. If you believe yourselves to be sages, sages you will be tomorrow. There is nothing to obstruct you. For if there is one common doctrine that runs through all our apparently fighting and contradictory sects, it is that all glory, power, and purity are within the soul already; only according to Ramanuja, the soul contracts and expands at times, and according to Shankara, it comes under a delusion. Never mind these differences. All admit the truth that the power is there -- potential or manifest it is there -- and the sooner you believe that, the better for you. All power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak; do not believe that you are half - crazy lunatics, as most of us do nowadays. You can do anything and everything without even the guidance of any one(Acharya). All power is there. Stand up and express the divinity within you.”*

Mananeeya Eknathji when he started Vivekananda Kendra, a spiritually oriented service mission, did not declare himself or Swamiji as our guru. But in the Ishwariya Karya, Ishwara is our guide. Therefore Omkar is our Guru. The divinity within, the divinity in our motherland, the divinity in our colleague-Karyakartas would guide us. In our branch centers we keep Omkar. Should it be like just a photo kept in one corner? No. It stands for the constructive approach to everything, it stands for seeing the common ground of different sects that are in our country, it stands for seeing all that is positive in others, it stands for inclusive approach and ultimately it stands for our Guru. So we should keep it with respect and solemnity.

Gurupurnima Day is to remind us to acquire these qualities, to become a Rishi and to make us resolve for establishing India again on the throne of Jagadguru. It is a day to reiterate the vision and mission of our Rishis "Krinvanto Vishwam Aryam." Literal meaning of Utsava is ‘Taking up-elevating.’ Therefore the celebration or Utsava should take us upwards that is towards our goal. Swami Vivekananda has said, *“It is not only that we must revive our own country - that is a small matter; I am an imaginative man and my idea is the conquest of the whole world by Hindu race. Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life, and I wish that each one of you who hear me today will have the same dream in your minds, and stop not till you have realized the dream. ...There is no other alternative, we must do it or die.”* If we as a nation do not work to influence the world then the world is going to influence us and going to set agenda for our destruction. Therefore, to spread the all-inclusive thoughts of India we would also have to confront and contain the exclusive thoughts. The exclusive thoughts have to be contained with the thoughts given by our Rishis, which are inclusive as well as all encompassing. Vivekananda Kendra is a ‘Thought movement’ and inheriting the thoughts of

the Rishis and living life like them would really increase our capacity to fulfill this work. The Utsava of Gurupurnima is to strengthen ourselves for this great task to make resolves to further dedicate ourselves.

As told by Swami Vivekananda, *“This is the time to decide your future -- while you possess the energy of youth, not when you are worn out and jaded, but in the freshness and vigour of youth. Work -- this is the time; for the freshest, the untouched, and unsmelled flowers alone are to be laid at the feet of the Lord, and such He receives. Rouse yourselves, therefore, for life is short. There are greater works to be done than aspiring to become lawyers and picking quarrels and such things. A far greater work is this sacrifice of yourselves for the benefit of your race, for the welfare of humanity. What is in this life? You are Hindus, and there is the instinctive belief in you that life is eternal. Sometimes I have young men come and talk to me about atheism; I do not believe a Hindu can become an atheist. He may read European books, and persuade himself he is a materialist, but it is only for a time. It is not in your blood. You cannot believe what is not in your constitution; it would be a hopeless task for you. Do not attempt that sort of thing. I once attempted it when I was a boy, but it could not be. Life is short, but the soul is immortal and eternal, and one thing being certain, death, let us therefore take up a great ideal and give up our whole life to it. Let this be our determination, and may He, the Lord, who "comes again and again for the salvation of His own people", to quote from our scriptures -- may the great Krishna bless us and lead us all to the fulfilment of our aims!*

During the celebration of Gurupurnima for this year, let us focus on these thoughts.

With warm regards and prayers

Yours sincerely

B. Nivedita