

**SPEECH OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF UTTARAKHAND FOR
'NATIONAL YOUTH DAY' CELEBRATION AT R.K. MISSION,
DEHRADUN ON 12TH JANUARY, 2017**

At the very outset, I would like to express my happiness to be a part of the National Youth Day celebrations which coincide with the Birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and I must thank the Swamiji from R.K. Mission for inviting me. Keeping in view the huge influence that Swami Vivekananda had on the youth, very befittingly, Government have recognized this day as the National Youth Day. After all, Swami Vivekananda has been the best known icon for youth, this country has ever had.

Over a century and a half has elapsed since the birth of Swami Vivekananda. Today he is universally acclaimed as one of the greatest sons of India as well as one of the world's great men. His life was a confluence of the oriental and the occidental, the past and the future, tradition and modernity, and religion and science. He was the architect of the spiritual bridge that connected the East and the West – a bridge built on the central truths of Vedanta.

According to Swami Vivekananda, most of the problems of youth are due to their secret fear to face the unknown, face the complexities of life, face misery, face struggle and competition, fear

to face frustration or failure. He advised the Youth to have a strong will power, the inner strength, the spirit of adventure and exploration, only that would strengthen them to face challenges and bring out their hidden energy and leadership qualities.

Youth are the future of every nation and the strongest force to bring about a positive change in society. It is during this period of life that one can mould his or her future by acquiring the requisite skills to shoulder responsibilities as adults. They must explore their strengths, interests and aptitudes to enable them to translate their daydreams into actual possibilities in their adult life. Swami ji used to say “See for the highest, aim at that highest, and you shall reach the highest”.

Conceptually, ‘Youth’ are a group with diverse possibilities but they remain vulnerable. Youth are vulnerable, because they can be manipulated, brainwashed and led astray. If the young are indoctrinated with hatred and the cult of violence, then they can become a burden on the society. On the other hand, if they stand for peace and progress, their enormous energy can produce miracles. Youth energy therefore needs channeling in the right direction. Youth groups may be academic, religious, political, sports-based, cultural, professional and many others. The goal should always be to create responsible and conscientious individuals who will build on the foundation of their rich past to

develop a meaningful vision for the future. They should be the harbingers of a better social order building bridges between communities and cultures across the countries. Ultimately our country's development will depend to a large extent on how the youth shape up and what they contribute towards the society

Swami ji also conceived of education as the primary means of rebuilding the society. According to him, the education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle of life, which does not bring out strength of character and a spirit of philanthropy is not worth the name. He said this over a hundred years ago, but how true it is, even today. Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs. In this context, 'Value Education' is considered important. In education, apart from professional specializations we have to essentially focus on the moral compass and a value system which provides for a bulwark against the tide of commercialism and consumerism, that is sweeping our societies with superficiality and false values and priorities.

Vivekananda along with Sri Aurobindo, have been the two stalwarts of the Indian renaissance of the later 19th century and early 20th century, who contributed most to the regeneration of the Indian mindscape and consequent re-flowering of the true Indian culture.

This awakening was a great turning point in Indian history. For about a thousand years, after the fall of Harsha's empire, decay and degeneration had set in, and the Indian mind had suffered a long spell of drought and desertification, with few spaces of green in-between. And society got riddled with evils of many sorts—superstition, fatalism, caste oppression, sati, child marriage, callousness towards women etc.

In the early phase of British rule, it was attempted to altogether bury the few strands of Indian culture what was still visible from beneath the desert sand. Lord Macaulay made their intentions clear in his well-known 'Minute' of 1835 : "We must have a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect." He went to the extent of saying : " Who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India." At that time, compelled by the circumstances a large section of educated Indians openly denounced their own ancient culture.

It was in these dreary and depressing circumstances that Swami Vivekananda appeared on the scene like a hurricane, bringing to the surface the treasures of Indian thought.

Vivekananda's exhortations to the masses were :

Lift up your head. For each one of you carries God within..... The masses in India cry to sixty millions gods, and still die like dogs. This bending of the knees to superstition does not befit you. You are infinite, deathless, birthless..... You yourself are the proof of God! 'Thou are That'.

Such clarion call made by Vivekananda during his extensive tours across the country generated a wave of self-confidence in the people and also a will to stand up and be counted. An intellectual and spiritual environment conducive to the growth of cultural assertion and freedom was created. It influenced a wide spectrum of leadership, from the apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi, to the towering, Subhas Chandra Bose.

In his autobiography, *An Indian Pilgrim*, Subhas recalled: "My headmaster had aroused my aesthetic sense. But he did not give me an ideal to which I could give my whole being. That Vivekananda gave to me.'

In 1901, Gandhi ji visited Kolkata to attend the Congress session. After the session, he went to see Vivekananda, who, at that time, was seriously ill. What transpired between the two is not known. But it can be safely assumed that the issue of untouchability was discussed.

Earlier, in his writings and public speeches, Swami Vivekananda had repeatedly denounced the practice of

untouchability as unmitigated evil. It was Gandhi who then undertook the mission of eliminating these frailties in his own inimitable way.

In the course of his visit to India, from 6 to 8 November 2010, President Obama reverentially recalled the celebrated address Vivekananda delivered to the World Parliament of Religions, held at his home town in Chicago more than a century ago. He acknowledged the contribution made by the 'renowned Swami' to the expansion of America's moral imagination.

Before Vivekananda's visits to the United States, hardly any American was aware of the ennobling features of ancient Indian philosophy and the deep insights it provided into the Ultimate Reality.

Swami ji's second view of Universal Religion is that it is a collective concept like the United Nations. It can be called integral Vedanta. Universal Religion is the sum total of all the existing religions. Each religion has something unique, and also some deficiency. When all the religions are taken together, they complement one another and overcome their deficiencies. Swami ji said, 'My idea, therefore, is that all these religions are different forces working for the good of mankind. According to Swami ji, all attempts at establishing a Universal Religion have failed because of

the failure to accept the differences among religions. The sum total of all religions in which each religion retains its own unique features – this is what Swami ji’s second conception of Universal Religion means. It means, as Swami ji put it in his famous farewell address at the Parliament of Religions in 1893, ‘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.

Swami Vivekananda’s life and work was one of dynamic action which can be a great inspiration for the youth of the region. As young citizens of the world, the youth have great creative energy with the potential of reaching great heights. Today’s society also poses multifaceted challenges and there is need for the youth to rise up to these challenges and become forces of positive change. Therefore, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, I exhort you to “Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny”. For in you lies the future of the country and the world at large.

Jai Hind!