

YUVA BHARATI

Vol. 34 No.1

C VOICE OF YOUTH C*A Vivekananda Kendra Publication*

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India Will Become a World Power	Bharat Jhunjunwala	09	
Sanskrit	--	12	
Rangaswamy Elango	--	16	
To the Students	Sri Aurobindo	23	
Secret of Our Immortality	Guruji Golwalkar	24	
Swadharma-Swadesh-Swaraj	V.Rangarajan	25	
Vande Mataram	--	28	
Towards the New Independence Day	Satish Chowkulkar	32	
Source of Strength	Dr.K.Subrahmanyam	36	
V.K. Samachar	--	40	

*India must conquer the world, and nothing less
than that is my ideal.*

-- Swami Vivekananda

प्रार्थना – INVOCATION

प्रातःस्मरणमेतद् यो विदित्वाऽऽदरतः पठेत् ।
स सम्यग् धर्मानिष्ठः स्यात् संस्मृताखण्डभारतः ॥
॥ भारत माता की जय ॥

prātaṣmaraēametad yo viditvā"darataṁ paōhet
sa samyag dharmaniñōhaṁ syāt saāsmātākhaēòabhārataṁ
bhārata mātā ké jai.

He who properly understands this Pratah-Smarana, and daily recites it ceremonially with devotion, will be a thoroughly religious fellow, and the picture of Akhanda Bharata (entire undivided India) will, for ever, remain engraved in his heart.

|| May Bharata Mata be triumphant and victorious for ever! ||

EDITORIAL



Free India – Vision and Reality: Where do we go from here?

Vision

The history of India's freedom fight dates back to a thousand years, ever since waves of foreign invaders, inspired and motivated by the zeal of religious fanaticism entered this holy land of "Sanathana dharma" and gradually settled down to establish an empire and change the very complexion of the cultural map of this great country. Since then, India was at war. The last phase of the freedom struggle could be traced to the year 1857. That was the occasion of the First War of Indian Independence against British imperialism. The movement continued for 90 years till India achieved her independence from the British rule in 1947. As history has repeatedly revealed, every great movement in India started from a spiritual awakening. The freedom movement was no exception. The fountainhead of this mighty movement was an unprecedented spiritual awakening set in motion by the Sree Ramakrishna –

Vivekananda Movement. That was the beginning of a new era. Sri Aurobindo, the prophet of Indian Nationalism, has summed up the great significance of this date in the following words.

"A new era dates from his birth, an era in which the peoples of the earth will be lifted for a while into communion with god and spirituality become the dominant note of human life. What Christianity failed to do, what Mohammedanism strove to accomplish in times as yet unripe, what Buddhism half-accomplished for a brief period and among a limited number of men Hinduism as summed up in the life of Sri Ramakrishna has to attempt for the world."

Swami Vivekananda was "The Patriot Monk" who expounded the spirit and philosophy of this great awakening that embodied itself in the fervour of nationalist movement and inspired an entire generation of leaders in all walks of life to throw themselves into a relentless pursuit of the country's freedom. Swamiji himself had a vision of the bright future that was to be the blossoming of the liberation of India from the foreign yoke. He gave expression to his vision in the following words:

"I do not see into the future; nor do I care to see. But one vision I see clearly as life before me, that the Ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on her throne rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction."

Though Swamiji was reluctant to delineate the contours of his vision of free India, he has given unmistakable indications of his

line of thinking. "Let New India arise – out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fishermen, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emerge from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains. These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years--suffered it without murmur, and as a result have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality."

Poets and politicians, sages and saints, scientists and industrialists, artists and musicians took up this theme and each worked in his own way to contribute to this great consummation. Swamiji himself exhorted the youths of India. "*For the coming fifty years let this alone be the object of your worship, this motherland of ours. Let all other vain gods disappear.*" It is no coincidence of history, but the fulfilment of our nation's destiny that exactly after fifty years of Swamiji's utterance of these words, our motherland became free.

Swamiji has not shrunk from using the word Socialism to express his vision of future India, but he always qualified it with the word "Vedantic". The future of India should be based on the application of the fundamental principles of Vedantic or Sanathana Dharma.

Similarly Sri Aurobindo also was uncompromising on this vital point. He had replied in a letter to one who invited him to return to the freedom movement and

champion the cause of Socialism, that without first realizing the spiritual base of India and making it the sure foundation of every aspect of her many splendoured development, if she takes to the alien ideologies of European Socialism, India will become a third rate country, blindly aping the western powers and endangering her own destiny. In spite of these warnings independent India appears to have taken to the very same half-baked ideas and suffered as a result.

Reality

Sixty years after independence the picture of free India that emerges is not inspiring, not even reassuring, it is in fact depressing. There may be many things, which can be quoted to the contrary. But to one who has not forgotten the vision of freedom for which the great leaders of our freedom movement had sacrificed everything, the present reality is in stark contrast. India may have many achievements to her credit in certain areas, but the ideas and the ideals that clearly inspired the freedom movement have not been fulfilled. On the other hand most of those great and noble ideas have been forgotten. *The vision and the reality are poles apart.* On the occasion of our independence day celebration, it would only be proper if we spend a little time and thought over the mismatch between the two.

"The Freedom at Midnight" and "Tryst with Destiny" speech at the Red Fort by our first Prime Minister is indeed memorable if not historic. The joy of freedom was mingled with the tears of the tragedy of partition. But it was thought, and even given

expression to, that the vivisection of the Motherland was only temporary. It was hoped that people would realize the folly of the unnatural division. Seers like Sri Aurobindo prophesied that partition of India will go and a united Bharath would emerge out of the debris of chaos that was partition. He also predicted that freedom of India would be followed by the unity of the Asian continent. India's gift of spirituality, he believed, will reach the four corners of the world and lift up human consciousness. Sri Aurobindo had a still more resplendent vision of India leading humanity to the next stage of evolution. Most glorious vision indeed!

But when we observe the contemporary scene, we realize, with a pang in our heart that nothing of the sort has taken place during these six decades. On the contrary the misery of division has aggravated. India that was divided into two has further been divided. Kashmir that was unambiguously included as an indivisible part of India is now a "disputed territory" over which wars have been fought. Kashmir, that was the paradise of India, is now a burning cauldron. East Bengal that has produced some of the most brilliant sons and daughters of Bharat is now not only demographically invading India but also sending armed terrorists to destroy our unity and security. The vision of a reunited India that many had entertained has faded and is now haunting people like a nightmare. *The land of Bankim Chandra and Tagore is an enemy territory bent upon weakening India.*

For ages China was our neighbour and friend. We had sent out Buddhist missionaries to spread the message of

Buddha's Ahimsa to the far-flung Chinese Empire. She sent hundreds of her talented student scholars to the Universities of India, particularly, Nalanda, who went back with treasures of knowledge and also volumes of books. Independent India under the visionary Prime Minister, a keen student of history, recaptured the ancient ties between the two countries; conveniently forgetting that the old Buddhist China has by now become Communist China. The leaders of the two nations signed the "Panchseela" agreement of non-aggression and peaceful co-existence. The whole of India reverberated with the praise of the agreement. Indian leaders were intoxicated with the false opium whereas their Chinese counterparts were bidding their time to send their armies across Indian borders.

The Indian Prime Minister was invited to London, where he was officially awarded two honorary doctorates- one for his contribution to international understanding by the Hamburg University. Praises were showered on him. Responding to the honours, he made a great eloquent speech in which he said that a "One-World Order" is clearly emerging and such a world order will be shaped by the great principles of "Panchaseela" enunciated by India and China. That was in the year 1956. But within a short while our Prime Minister was rudely awakened by the Chinese army marching across Indian Territory throwing the Panchaseel agreement to the winds. The peaceful land of Tibet was annexed by the Chinese army with much violence, bloodshed and destruction. And now Communist China has constructed the longest railway from Beijing to Lahsa across the Himalayan ranges, bringing her

armies to the borders of Nepal and Bhutan where the Maoists are already spreading their red carpet. Many rounds of border discussions have been held with no results. There are men and media who are singing the glories of peaceful solutions and mutual friendship. Another “panchaseela” in the offing? The question naturally arises: **“Will Asian unity come about?” If it does, who will bring it about? What will be India’s role?** Will the imperialistic, aggressive Communist China hoist the flag of unity over the Asian countries? Will India play second fiddle to a dominant China?

Two of Mahathmaji’s visions of free India, which are fundamental to his life’s philosophy have suffered serious setback in the wake of india’s independence. One of them is eradication of poverty, particularly at the rural level by empowering the villages of India by reviving the ancient concept of autonomous villages to which Gandhiji gave the significant name **“Gramswaraj”**. Strengthening the agricultural base and developing small scale agro-industrial network in villages and instilling the spirit of self-help and Swadeshi was the very essence of Gandhian approach to rural India’s all round development. That was the corner stone of his vision of **“Ramarajya”**. Khadi and village industries were closely connected with countrywide projects. Though Gandhiji was convinced that his philosophy was ultimately meant for all humanity across the world, he was realistic enough to realize that the process must spread from the soil of Rural India. He had great faith in the skill and ability of our farmers to create models of prosperous villages that could be emulated by other countries also. He wanted the villages of

India to initiate the process. Unfortunately India has now taken to the path of Globalization with the result that external economic and civilizational forces have swamped our farmers in the Indian villages. **Rural India is today under the grip of poverty, famine, unemployment and illiteracy.** The gulf between the rich and poor has multiplied manifold. Suicide by farmers due to starvation has become a normal feature. Those whom Gandhiji expected to feed the rest of India are themselves dying for want of food. Vulgar Consumerism that Gandhiji severely condemned as immoral is now rampant. In the place of Swadeshi by Indians for Indians, multi-national corporations are ruling the roost, crippling and paralyzing the economy of vast masses of Indian population.

All that is stated above may be reason enough for despair for a superficial observer. **But the unique and age-old history of India is such that this immortal nation has passed through much more severe difficulties and come out unscathed. Sixty years is a short period in the history of our country.**

For a Bright Future

But one has to seriously ponder over the causes for these mismatches between the vision and the reality. One of the main reasons is that our freedom movement did not take the course it was expected to take with the result that there was a radical departure when it came to its end. The country which was looked upon as the sacred Motherland was partitioned with rivers of blood flowing and the psyche of

the people left confused and disrupted.

There was no unified will nor optimism so much required for a sound rebuilding of the nation on the basis of our eternal spiritual and cultural values. *Secondly, the Hindu society was considerably weakened and its faith in the leaders who were at the helm of affairs was shaken to its roots. Finally, those leaders who emerged as most powerful and who were supposed to execute the grand vision were themselves not fully imbued with the same.*

They had their own vision with divergent set of ideas. So the vision and the execution were at cross-purposes. The result is that a country which had all the promises and potentialities for taking a leading position in the affairs of the world is still struggling to find its feet amidst the currents and counter-currents of international politics.

Where is the solution? We have to retrieve our lost vision - the vision of Swami

Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahathma Gandhi and such like. India has to rediscover her soul, and also its "Swabhava" and work out its "Swadharna". As Sri Guruji whose birth centenary the nation is celebrating now has repeatedly stated, forgetting our "Swadharna" we are following "Paradharna". Let us remember Lord Krishna's statement in the Bhagavad Gita, "swadharme nidhanam sreyah, paradharmo bhayavahah". Even death in the course of pursuing one's "Swadharna" is auspicious whereas the consequences of following "Paradharna" will be terrible. On the occasion of the anniversary of our Independence Day, let us collectively pledge ourselves to follow the path of "Swadharna", which alone will lead to ultimate victory.

-- P.PARAMESWARAN



INDIA WILL BECOME A WORLD POWER

Bharat Jhunjunwala

It appears a bit pompous to claim that India will soon become a world economic power, given our poor record in providing the basic needs of our people such as education, health care, clean drinking water, roads and electricity. But India may become a world power precisely because our government is not overloaded with these responsibilities that are managed by the community in our tradition. The main requirement for becoming a global economic power is that we have a high growth rate.

A comparison between India, the US and Germany can be made from this standpoint. According to the World Development Indicators published by the World Bank, the average growth rate of the three countries during the last two decades was 5.7 percent, 3.4 percent and 1.9 percent per year respectively. We will catch up with them just as the cyclist catches up with the pedestrian.

But our population is also increasing at a faster rate. This cancels our high growth rate to some extent. Nevertheless, our per capita growth rate remains high at 3.8 percent against US's 2.3 percent and Germany's 1.7 percent per year. The Indian cyclist will catch up with the pedestrian even though our cycle is somewhat overloaded with higher population. It is significant that our growth rate has increased during the last two decades. According to the World Bank, our growth rate in the eighties was 5.7 percent, which

increased to 5.8 percent in the nineties. Presently it is estimated to be above 5 percent. In contrast, the growth rate of the US declined from 3.5 percent to 3.3 percent and that of Germany from 2.3 percent to 1.6 percent during the last two decades. Our cyclist is not only driving fast but is also accelerating.

The question of basic amenities remains. However, there is a fundamental difference between the growth process of our country and that of the West. Tagore pointed out that the center of the Western civilization is the state. For example, according to the Human Development Report 2004, our total expenditure on health was 4.9 percent of GDP against 13.9 percent in the US and 10.8 percent in Germany. But just 11 percent of the health expenditure in India was made by the government against 45 percent in the US and 75 percent in Germany.

The quality of private expenditure is generally better. First, taxes have to be imposed. Expenses are incurred in tax collection. There is corruption in the process. It also renders our businesses uncompetitive and adds to unemployment. Then the revenue moves through many ministries and departments to reach the neighbourhood government doctor. The doctor then provides 'free' treatment to the citizen. Ultimately, payment is made by the citizen in both systems.

The citizen pays directly to the doctor in our system. The citizen is taxed and then he is provided with 'free' facilities in the US system. Thus, we must not reach a conclusion by looking at higher amount of public expenditure in the rich countries. Among the rich countries, those having lean governments like the US are doing better than those having heavy governments like Germany. According to the World Development Indicators 2004, the revenue of the Indian government was 12.6 percent of the GDP in 1990, against 18.9 percent for the US and 25.9 percent for Germany.

The figures for later years have not been given but the trend remains. No wonder the facilities provided by the government in these countries are much better than ours. This seems to be our weakness. But, in reality, this may be our strength because these heavy public expenditure by the rich countries is unsustainable. To assess the future of these

countries by looking at their government expenditure is like assessing the future of a person by looking at his consumption of liquor.

We should not be troubled by the weak provision of health care, education and other facilities by the government. We must focus on strengthening regulation of private providers of health and education and implementing a competition policy in these sectors.

The role of government is essential only in the provision of public goods like education certification; curriculum setting, epidemiological research, public health, sanitation and drinking water. If at all, comparison should be made of government expenditure only on these public goods. We can catch up with these countries because our growth rate is higher and the currencies of the rich countries may face devaluation soon. *The New Indian Express*



*All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves.
Therefore make your own future.*

YUVA BHARATI

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“...it will not be a good day for India when the ancient tongue ceases entirely to be written or spoken.”

So prophesied Sri Aurobindo about Devabhasha, the language of the gods, otherwise known as Sanskrit. There is a growing awareness of late of the genius behind this ancient language. People from all walks of life are discovering how it relates to their life and more importantly, how it enhances the quality of life itself. Over the next twelve months we will put across some of these views from around the world which will help our readers appreciate and understand the worth of Sanskrit and the need for a conscious resurgence.

1

SANSKRIT

Sanskrit is a language of antiquity. The roots of many languages of the world are found in Sanskrit. It is often called the Mother of languages, Sarvabhashajanani. Tradition tells us that in the Sanskrit language there is a perfect and harmonious relationship between sound and sense, for here the sound and sense are inseparable. This relationship is based on some eternal principles. Sri Aurobindo recognises this very characteristic feature of Sanskrit and says - “The Sanskrit language is the ‘Devabhasha’... It is the language of Satya Yuga based on the true and perfect relation of vak and artha. Everyone of its vowels and consonants has particular and inalienable force which exists by the nature of things and not by development or human choice;...” [Sri



Aurobindo: ‘Hymns to the Mystic Fire’, SABCL Vol.11, p. 449]

Sanskrit is capable of expressing all types of feelings, ideas and thoughts in a perfect manner which cannot be done as perfectly in any other language. Due to its vast creative possibilities it is also capable of expressing precisely and minutely abstract thoughts as well as the most profound and sublime ideas. Sri Aurobindo observed that this language “is one of the most magnificent, the most perfect and wonderfully sufficient literary instruments developed by human mind;...”[Sri Aurobindo: ‘The Foundations of Indian Culture’, SABCL Vol.14, p. 255] He describes Sanskrit as the ‘language of Yoga’, and adds that the supreme experiences and unusual conceptions which are a part of yogic experience are “difficult to represent accurately in any other language than the ancient Sanskrit tongue in which alone they have been to some extent systematised.” [Sri Aurobindo: ‘The Synthesis of Yoga’, SABCL Vol.20, pp. 11-12]

Sanskrit is “at once majestic and sweet and flexible, strong and clearly formed and full and vibrant and subtle;...”[Sri Aurobindo: ‘The Foundations of Indian Culture’, SABCL Vol.14, p. 255] One can find in the works of Vyasa, Valmiki, Kalidasa, Bharavi, Magha, Sivasvami, Banabhatta,

Bhavabhuti, the majesty of Sanskrit language and in the works of Sriharsa, Dandi and Jayadeva, its sweetness. The flexibility of this language can clearly be observed in the Citrakavya or figurative literature. Strength and structural perfection are seen in almost all the literary works of Sanskrit. One can feel the subtle vibration of the sounds in the Mantras of the Vedas and the Upanishads and the stotras written by the seer poets. The philosophical texts and other Shastras reveal its utmost subtlety.

Sanskrit is the language in which India's real soul is reflected. It is the language of its culture and people. It is the National inheritance of this country. The contribution of it to the national life and culture of India is incomparable. It is not only a symbol of national pride and unity and harmony but also much of India's future rests on this classical language and without it India would find it difficult to progress. Sri Aurobindo points out that "Sanskrit ought still to have a future as a language of the learned and it will not be a good day for India when the ancient tongue ceases entirely to be written or spoken." [Sri Aurobindo: 'The Hour of God', SABCL Vol.17, p. 299]

Sanskrit can be a tremendous unifying force. It is also capable of bringing an end to the language problem of India and according to Sri Aurobindo should be its National Language. The Mother says, "The

ideal would be in a few years, to have a rejuvenated Sanskrit as the representative language of India, that is, a spoken Sanskrit. Sanskrit is behind all the languages of India and it should be that. This was Sri Aurobindo's idea when we spoke about it... here as soon as one begins to want a National language, everyone starts quarrelling. Each one wants it to be his own and that is foolish. But no one could object to Sanskrit." [The Mother. 11. 11. 1967]

A simple spoken Sanskrit rather than that of scholars is necessary to enter the heart of our glorious culture and establish a continuity between the past and the future. In Sri Aurobindo's words - "... but the vital question is how we are to learn and make use of Sanskrit and the indigenous languages so as to get to the heart and intimate sense of our own culture and establish a vivid continuity between the still living power of our past and the yet uncreated power of our future,..." [Sri Aurobindo: 'The Hour of God', SABCL Vol.17, p. 195] The Mother gave much importance to the use of simple Sanskrit. [The Mother. 11. 11. 1967] In fact she herself kept learning Sanskrit whenever she got the time. [The Mother. Vol.12, p. 24, p. 11] In her opinion a knowledge of Sanskrit was necessary for any one who claimed to be an Indian; so she emphatically said that "every child born in India should know it, just as every child born in France has to know French." [The Mother. 11. 11. 1967]



Published and printed by N Viswanath on behalf of Vivekananda Kendra from 5, Singarachari Street, Triplicane, Chennai-5. at M/s. RNR Printers and Publishers, 8, Thandavarayan Street, Triplicane, Chennai-5. **Editor: P Parameswaran.**



THE IMPORTANCE OF RANGASWAMY ELANGO



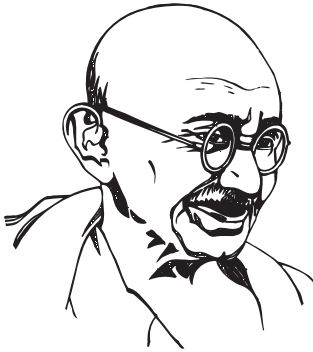
In a nation where collective finger pointing at politicians, grieving at the slowness of democracy and deriding India itself are fashionable, Rangaswamy Elango is an object lesson. He is an engineer for whom the outer world lay open but instead he chose to return to his village. He was born a Dalit, a people who have many justified grievances with Indian society. He chose to harmonise passions. He had choices enough to stay away from the rough and tumble of politics. He chose it as the means to lead his village, Kuthambakkam to prosperity. He can spend his life basking in the successes he has wrought so far in Kuthambakkam. But he has chosen to evangelise village centred development. He is a family man with longings for his loved ones. But he lives a solitary life for his cause, Gram Swaraj [the Autonomous Village]. Most of all, at a time when it is the vogue to belittle Gandhi, he adores the great man as the one who truly understood India. The career path of Rangaswamy Elango needs to be widely known. Just fifty more Panchayat leaders like him across India are enough as nodes from where sensible village development can radiate in all directions.

Well to do but ill at ease

Elango was born on Nov 12, 1960 in Kuthambakkam where his family has lived for close to a thousand years at least. They

cherish the association an ancestor of theirs had with the great reformer philosopher Sri Ramanujar, who was born in Sriperumbudur, nearby. Despite being Dalit they have not felt alienated from mainstream Indian thought. Village realities of ghettoised living however, had seemed inevitable. Elango's family owned some lands and his father was a Government employee. So they were reasonably well to do, but young Elango grew up amidst squalor and hopelessness in the Harijan 'colony'. Drunken brawls, wife beating and wails of women and children were nightly fares in houses around his. An academically inclined Elango could not quite shut these out nor ignore the filth and the bogs as he picked his way to his school. His mind however filed these away.

"At lunch I saw my mates had nothing to eat," he recalls. "They would gulp glasses of water and pretend they were alright. I always shared my lunch box. But, there was never enough nor did it seem a solution." His mind filed that away too. Walking back from school on hot days, through upper caste streets he found people were willing to give him water but not to his mates. Was it because they knew he came from a sober family, was well washed and studious? His mind did some sums with this and the filed information and came to a rough conclusion at an early age. Later as he grew up, he redid



those sums and realised what it added up to: there can be no individual happiness if there is misery all around.

Elango was a good student and so entered the A C College of Technology, Chennai to study Chemical Engineering. He tried staying in the hostel for a few months. But was disturbed by thoughts of having run away from his reality. He began to commute the 40 km from his village by changing many buses each way. In the village he teamed up with his old mates to try and put some hope and dignity in their lives. They formed youth clubs, stuck wall posters with reformist messages, organised study groups, gave special tuitions and tried a number of other heart-achingly inadequate activities. Elango seems to have intuitively understood the importance of human development but was lost for a platform.

Flying on reluctant wings

The first technical graduate from Kuthambakkam was grabbed from the campus in 1982 by Oil India and posted in an exploration site in Orissa. For most young men in India to be on such a promising career belt is dream come true but Elango found himself tethered to his village. A brief holiday revealed his youth club members were drifting away. He quit his job and joined the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research [CSIR] in Chennai. Commutes to his village began again. His youth club revived.

In a while Elango was married to a young lady who was a chemistry graduate. Two baby girls arrived in quick succession. By then Elango had visualised a long term road map. He and Sumathy had many conversations and agreed on a plan. They

would make a home in Chennai, he would take care of the children and she would do her Masters in chemistry. Then she would find a job and provide for the family and he would return full time to the village. He speaks feelingly of her: "I can't quite estimate her contribution in whatever I have done. Until I began getting some money from an Ashoka Fellowship in 2002, she has been the bread winner. She has supported the family for over a decade without a murmur and raised our two girls."

In 1994, Sumathy got a job in the Oil and Natural Gas Commission [ONGC] and Elango promptly quit his. Two years earlier there had been caste riots in the village. Kuthambakkam is a Dalit majority village. There had been upper caste taunts and mob fury in response. Vanniars fled the village. After about a week when they did not return, Elango began to make many trips seeking the scattered Vanniars and persuading them to return. He was but a young man in his early thirties.

Village Republics

Not many Indians are sufficiently aware of the impact of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment spear-headed by Rajiv Gandhi in 1993. It sought to create totally self governing villages with far reaching powers. A plenary of village people [Gram Sabha] was mandated to meet every quarter and elections to the office of Panchayat President [Sarpanch] was mandated for every five years. The intention was to create village level Republics. Tamil Nadu ratified it in 1994 and elections were announced soon after.

Elango threw his hat in and won. But despite his long term commitment to the

village and work with harmonising it, he found the margin of victory disappointing. But he understood the powers at his disposal. He rolled up his sleeves. His objectives were two: create jobs and bring in hope.

He did not know his Gandhi formally, but seemed in accord. He would build drains in the poorer ghettos and show them the difference. At the outskirts of the village was a factory that polished granite slabs. It had a huge disposal problem with its random off cuts. It was willing to pay for it to be carried away. Engineer, President Elango was delighted. He employed local labour, and built a drain which had smooth granite mosaic walls. The 'colony' drained fast down the slick 2 km long works. Of the budgeted Rs.15 Lakhs for this project Elango had spent just Rs. 4L, half of which went in wages for local folks. But, the specification was to build the drain with rubble stones from a nearby hill. He had violated 'prescribed norms'. In other words, he had deprived transporters of their ferrying opportunity and contractors, their civil works. Vested interests worked overtime. Elango was suspended from office under Section 205 of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act [TNPA].

He was devastated. He thought he had made a novel environmental, economic and development statement – and he had been thrown out and humiliated for his pains. Why had he not heeded those that had said politics was a cess-pool? Why had he abandoned a promising career? What had he to show for Sumathy's support? He went into a deep depression. He thought of quitting.

The Gandhi moment

Sumathy left him alone for a few days and then made one of her rare visits to Kuthambakkam. She held him and asked him if that was the end of his passions. 'Are you going to give up because of this one setback?' She had brought a book for him, 'Saththia Sodhanai', a Tamil version of Gandhi's 'My Experiments with Truth'. She left him alone again.

Elango says though he had heard of the book he had not read it. His predicament gave it an immediacy as he read it now. It seemed written for him. He understood the mind of a dogged man who had faced greater odds. The book taught him grit. Within a few days he was in Chennai calmly telling the Secretary to the Government: "No, I will not sue you but sit in protest until you convene a plenary session of my village. Let your charges be read out, my defence heard and the villagers decide my fate." He contacted the press. On Jan 10, 1999, 1300 people gathered and Elango defended himself. Before the sun set on the day long trial, the Government sent in an order revoking the suspension. The entire village had rallied behind him. "I understood Gandhi that day," he says. "First be truthful, then be fearless."

There has been no looking back since then. Elango was re-elected with a huge majority at the end of five years. The graft mafia ran away. Officials backed his approach of cutting out contractors and employing locals instead. As he created jobs, liquor menace receded. He had always paid above the market average, currently Rs.70 per day; and most revolutionarily, precisely the same for women.

He mastered the TNPA and availed of every scheme for the village. “There are enough well meaning schemes announced by the Government. It is up to the local leadership to go and get them,” he says. He has been an efficient conduit between his people and available opportunities.

One of the housing concepts that the Tamil Nadu Government promoted was Samathuvapurams [Harmony Estates]. The idea was to make different castes and religions to live together in a campus of about 50 dwellings each. Over 150 came up all over the State. Most were shoddily built mockeries left to fast buck contractors in cahoots with local leadership. Elango demanded—and got—a stay in the design and execution. He got HUDCO to design a soulful campus. Local soil was pressed by people into mud blocks to build the houses. The community hall was designed to be an activity centre where now vocational courses and village businesses are run. The money set aside for that darling of the Government—a commemorative arch—was used to build a meeting place. Of the Rs.88 Lakhs that the project cost, over a fourth was spent on wages for villagers. More was saved by using local materials. Villagers assimilated many cost effective building technologies. Houses in this Samathuvapuram are about 40% larger and are better designed.

So it is with all activities in Kuthambakkam. Extensive water management works, processing of agricultural produce, collective businesses run by women, all emphasise local involvement.

Economics for village clusters

This approach recurs in Elango’s economic thinking which is deeply influenced by J C

Kumarappa. “If you bring in the contractors you are exporting jobs,” he says. He got a door-to-door survey done in the village and found the village consumes Rs.60 Lakhs worth of goods and services per month. Elango discovered to his astonishment, that nearly Rs 50 L of that can be produced at the village level. Since then, he has been evolving an economic theory of village clusters. In simple terms about seven or eight villages form a free trade zone. They identify and produce goods and services without overlap. They consume each other’s produce. And the money stays back and gets invested in human development. Ever the Gandhian and a Kumarappa acolyte, he challenges the theory of competition as being good at all levels. For villages it is co-operation that holds the key. Extreme Competition Theorists are heartless. ‘People have to be able to begin again,’ says Elango. “especially if they are able to see where things went wrong the first time.”

So he is building these village federations now. He has an appropriate technology development centre in the village. Over 21 schemes are ready. A few weeks ago, he made a presentation to 40 Panchayat leaders who are likely to form 3 federations. The District Collector attended. They are talking of budgets of Rs. 5 and 6 crores per cluster. Elango is optimistic for India. What does he think of the recent attempts to nibble away Panchayat’s powers? “Look, the system will come up with the necessary resistance,” he says. “In Tamil Nadu alone I have personally identified 1000 honest, successful Presidents. We have begun to network and stay connected. This number

will only increase. I am sure similar is the case in other States. I am starting a Panchayat Academy to teach the Presidents their powers and villages' entitlement. All these will rouse people's expectations. There is an emerging force not visible to the media and most people. It is at work changing India from below. This force cannot be stemmed."

It is 8 am. People are astir all over Kuthambakkam. They are all at some task. The streets are clean, the fields green and strangely in these times of drought, ducks are cavorting in its several ponds. Young men on swift motorbikes are racing out of the village on errands, with goods, to jobs. Signs of prosperity in village India? You are counting the bikes as they zing past, one, two... ten.

Keep counting —and wish: "Won't a few have Elango on their minds?"

(This article was taken from <http://www.goodnewsindia.com> GoodNewsIndia is dedicated to little known stories of positive action and is published by D. V. Sridharan)

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TO THE STUDENTS SRI AUROBINDO

In 1907 Sri Aurobindo resigned as the principal of the Bengal National College to join openly the fight for India's independence. At the farewell meeting Sri Aurobindo addressed the students. His advice is as valid and as inspiring today as it was nearly 90 years ago.

The Only Advice I can give you

The only piece of advice that I can give you now is carry on the work, the mission, for which this college was created. I have no doubt that all of you have realised by this time what this mission means. When we established this college and left other occupations, other chances of life, to devote our lives to this institution, we did so because we hoped to see in it the foundation, the nucleus of a nation, of the new India which is to begin its career after this night of sorrow and trouble, on that day of glory and greatness when India will work for the world. What we want here is not merely to give you a little information, not merely to open to you careers for earning a livelihood, but to build up sons for the Motherland to work and to suffer for her. That is why we started this college and that is the work to which I want you to devote yourselves in future. What has been insufficiently and imperfectly begun by us, it is for you to complete and lead to perfection. When I come back I wish to see some of you becoming rich, rich not for yourselves but that you may enrich the Mother with your riches. I wish to see some



of you becoming great, great not for your own sakes, not that you may satisfy your own vanity, but great for her, to make India

great, to enable her to stand up with head erect among the nations of the earth, as she did in days of yore when the world looked up to her for light. Even those who will remain poor and obscure. I want to see their very poverty and obscurity devoted to the Motherland.

There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake: train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will earn your living that you may live for her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice.



SECRET OF OUR IMMORTALITY

GURUJI GOLWALKAR



But the story of our nation presents an entirely different picture. Our society also had to face innumerable such invasions from the most barbaric races. Even political domination by these hostile forces over our people continued for a time, sometimes for several centuries. Off and on, forces of *adharm* reigned unleashing all their powers of destruction right from the days of Ravana. In that dark hour when Aurangzeb ruled, even a great martial saint like Samartha Ramadas was constrained to lament that an Incarnation of the Almighty alone could save Hindu Society from total annihilation. Later on, the wily Britisher also tried his hand at subverting our national life. Even today *adharmic* elements are having their heyday. But our society has survived all these grave crises. Again and again it has risen from the ashes, smashed the stranglehold of the evil forces and established the reign of righteousness. That glorious tradition continues unbroken to this day, charged as ever with the idealism and energy of resurgent nationalism. How did this miracle happen? What is the secret of the immortality, this deathless potency of our society, even after it was infected with the deadliest of poisons?

It is at once clear that the basis of our national existence was not political power. Otherwise, our fate would have been no better than that of those nations which remain today as only museum exhibits. The political rulers were never the standard-bearers of our society. They were never taken as the props of our national life. Saints and sages, who had risen above the mundane temptations of pelf and power and had dedicated themselves wholly for establishing a happy, virtuous and

integrated state of society, were its constant torch-bearers. They represented the *dharmasatta*. The king was only an ardent follower of that higher moral authority. Many a kingship licked the dust owing to various adverse and aggressive forces. But the *dharmasatta* continued to hold the people together.

Ravana was a shrewd aggressor. He knew this secret of our social coherence. He was aware that the life-centre of our society throbbed in the forest hermitages of sages and seers. Therefore, he concentrated his attacks on those jungle huts, on the sacrificial rites that were carried on there. But those spiritual heroes braved those onslaughts and stuck to their mission of rousing and integrating the people. The whole of society and, it is said, even gods were groaning under the heels of Ravana. Then the nation roused itself in the personality of Sri Rama. That great saviour was moulded and guided by sages like Vishwamitra, Vasishtha and Agastya. Not only was Sri Rama set up, but intense national consciousness of the whole of society was kept ablaze by these sages through regular discourses, discussions and various *dharmic* rites. How alert, how diligent were these 'half-naked faqirs' in their devotion to the welfare of society! Finally, even the deadly missile with which Sri Rama slew Ravana was given to him by the sage Agastya. It was because of their inspiration and untiring efforts that those lashing tides of *adharm* which had engulfed the 'three worlds' were ultimately laid low. Once again society rose ever more effulgent from the ashes of Lanka, the citadel of those *adharmic* forces.



SWADHARMA – SWADESHI—SWARAJ
M V.Rangarajan M

The day our people lost sight of this grand concept of the motherland, the motherland as the embodiment of the Divine Mother, the chosen land of gods and goddesses, the land destined to be the guru of the whole world,—and forgot that they were all immortal children of the Divine Mother the holy land, the *punyabhoomi*, the *karma bhoomi*, the *dharma bhoomi*, the *pitru-bhoomi*, and *matru-bhoomi* of the Aryan race – they fell a victim to foreign invasions and plunged into a period of darkness. A long spell of darkness it was, but it was not a night in which all cows appeared black. There were from time to time sporadic attempts by valiant and heroic children born in the womb of the mother who was still in the prison, to liberate her from thralldom and humiliation. Some of these attempts did bring in splendid results which have been recorded in golden letters in national history. But they proved to be short-lived, for it was destined that the Swaraj of the race was to be sought by the whole race with intense feeling of patriotism and nationalism springing up in the hearts of the millions all over the country at one and the same time.



Hundreds of years of slavery had blurred the vision of many of our people to such an extent that they failed to see the chains that fettered the limbs of Mother Bharat and the tears of blood oozing out of the crimson red eyes. During the period of the British, there were among us men who even considered that the foreigners were sent by providence and we were destined to be ruled by them for our own good. But it was during the same period that the motherland also produced great men of vision who saw the goal of this nation and set themselves to the task of awakening the masses from deep slumber.

The Ganapathi festival was also used to give impetus to the new Swadeshi movement that had sprung up and it became a greater eye-sore to the authorities. A new rule was promulgated by the British Government providing that no Ganapathi image should be taken for immersion without a pass from the Police Commissioner, unless it was taken by a single person over his head through the streets.

Rakhi Bandan was yet another festival which emerged as a powerful vehicle of nationalist movement during the mass uprising against the partition of Bengal in

1905. As soon as the announcement was made that partition would take effect on October 16, 1905, the leaders of the anti-partition movement made a public declaration that the day would be observed as a day of 'national mourning'. A detailed programme was drawn up for the day and the most sacrosanct and emotional item of the programme was *Rakhi Bandhan*—a red band of brotherly union was to be tied round the wrists of the people in the streets and everywhere by each other. Thousands of people observing fast on that day gathered on the banks of the Ganges, took a holy dip in the river to purify themselves and, after taking a vow to make continuous efforts

for the reunion of Bengal, tied *rakhis* round the wrists of friends and acquaintances and even of strangers. For the whole day the streets and bazaars echoed with the cry of Vande Mataram.

Durga Pooja also was celebrated in public to create political awakening among the masses. In the words of Bepin Chandra Pal, "Durga is for us not a mythological figure, but a representation of the Eternal Spirit of the Indian race, the symbol of Omnipotence in its dual aspect of Eternal Love and Inevitable Retribution, through which this very Love has to fulfil and realize in this world". He further adds, "Omnipotence has no message for the weakling".

THE ONLY SURE HELP

"AS VIVEKANANDA KENDRA gears up its machinery – the manpower and resources behind our large network of centres and branches – it is imperative to ensure that each step that is taken is in the right direction, in the right way." No better guideline can there be than to remember these words of Late Ma.Eknathji, whose death anniversary falls on 22nd August. Reproduced below is an extract from one of his lectures...

The capacity for the fulfilment of an idea, however difficult, will be there if it has been once grasped correctly and stands before your mind's eye. A genius is a person with ideas in his mind and an immensely strong will in his heart. A genius is said to be ten percent inspiration and ninety percent perspiration. This perspiration is for the manifestation of the inspiration within. One has to put in all his physical, mental and intellectual energies together and work hard. The question that will confront each of you is, "Am I capable of the industry, of the perspiration that is demanded of me?" With all your flaming devotion and determination, you have to realize that the external factors on which you have to depend for the successful execution of your objectives are beyond your control. Do not worry about them. It is true that those circumstances or factors, which we often believe to be under our control, prove to be otherwise, when we actually get initial work. But with all this, there is one thing to which you can always turn for unfailing guidance and support. This dishonest, lazy, careless, disobedient people may promise and may give thousand talks but they prove to be non-co-operative, but you can safely rely at all times on your own self for the fulfilment of your mission. All other help may fail, but there is a power within you which will never let you down. It is your own Self. Depend on it and march ahead with unceasing prayer for God to give you strength to fulfil His will.

VANDE MATARAM

Fifteenth of August dawns again, awakening in our minds the hallowed memories of the countless heroes and martyrs who sacrificed their precious lives at the altar of Mother Bharat and shed their sacred blood in the struggle for Her emancipation from foreign shackles. It is also the auspicious day on which Sri Aurobindo, the great seer of patriotism, the exponent of 'Vande Mataram' – the holy Mantra of Indian Nationalism— was born into this world. Perhaps it was not sheer accident that the day of deliverance of the country synchronized with the birthday of this Mahayogi, for everything that happens has the sanction of the Divine Will.

What was the motive that impelled these angelic souls to come under the spell of the captivating slogan of Swaraj and offer everything they had for the one sole aim of achieving freedom? It was not hatred towards the British or the system of their government or all the so-called modernisms that they brought into this country under the cover of their government. Nothing would be farther from truth than to say that a race that has, from time immemorial, proclaimed to the world the oneness of humanity and has welcomed all noble thoughts from all quarters of the world could hate any other class of people or the noble things that the class can give to humanity. On the other hand, Nationalism meant to these people, as Bepin Chandra Pal had put it in unambiguous terms, "the inviolable right of

the composite Indian people, to fully and freely live its own special life in its own way, following its own peculiar genius, and developing its specific culture to its highest perfection, and thus to contribute what is highest and best in it, to the general stock of human knowledge and human culture".

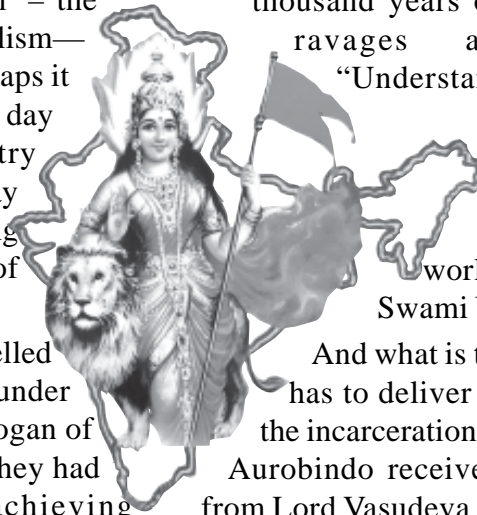
It was this Divine Destiny of the Nation that threw hundreds of patriotic young men into the cauldron of freedom struggle. It was for the fulfilment of this Heavenly Ordination that India survived the onslaughts of two thousand years of alien aggressions,

ravages and oppressions.

"Understand that India is still living because she has her own quota yet to give to the general store of the world's civilization", said

Swami Vivekananda.

And what is the message that India has to deliver to the world? During the incarceration in the Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo received the message right from Lord Vasudeva : "When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanatan Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists."



How is it that Free India going to convey this message to humanity? And when is it going to do? Have we forgotten the Word that our ancestors cherished so piously and handed over to us to be passed on to the humanity? Have we also forgotten the immense sacrifices that they made to preserve and protect this ambrosial ideal for the sake of universal happiness? No, we shall not and will not. As a first requisite for accomplishing our end, we shall once again arouse the spirit of patriotism in our masses.

When the country was languishing in the darkness of slavery and dependence, under the alien rulers, the path to awaken our people to the consciousness of their duty to the world was the struggle against foreign domination. But today the task before us is to rekindle the spirit of patriotism by awakening in our hearts an intense passion and love for our Motherland. As Aurobindo has pointed out, "Love has a place in politics, but it is the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine *ananda* of self-immolation for one's fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one's blood flow for the country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The pride in our

past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future and its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great service, high endurance for the country are its fruit. And the sap which keeps it alive is the realization of the Motherland of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the knowledge of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and service of the Mother".

Inculcation of this intense love for the Motherland and establishment of ineffable fraternity among the people are possible only when each and every citizen lives for others, and when there is absolute freedom from strife and squabbles inside the country. And the golden way to achieve this atmosphere of peace and harmony among countrymen is pointed out by the great patriot-monk Swami Vivekananda : "Be patient with everybody. Why should you mix in controversies? Bear with the various opinions of everybody. Patience, purity and perseverance will prevail. Please everybody without becoming a hypocrite and without being a coward. Hold on to your own ideas with strength and purity, and whatever obstructions may now be in your way, the world is bound to listen to you in the long run. Be positive ; do not criticize others. Give your message, teach what you have to teach, and there stop. The Lord knows the rest."

Let us live true to the call of the great Swami and rededicate ourselves to the task of conveying the message of Bharat to the whole world. Let us all join together and chant from the bottom of our hearts the immortal mantra. "VANDE MATARAM".

-Yuva Bharati, August 1975



TOWARDS THE NEW INDEPENDENCE DAY

Satish Chowkulkar

Once, while at Kanyakumari, I was enjoying the unique sunrise scene at Vivekananda Beach in Vivekanandapuram.

The freshness of the morning, the cool sea breeze, pleasing warmth of the sunrise on the horizon was accentuated by the silhouette of Vivekananda Rock Memorial – an ever – inspiring landmark in the mid-sea. Among the crowd on the beach, I noticed a group of college students watching the “Land Mark” and talking among themselves. I was curious to hear their conversation. Some of the questions raised by a few of them were very notable and answers were coming from an elderly person standing thereby. This person, I later came to know as Shiva Swarupananda.

Q: Vivekananda was born in Calcutta and became famous after he spoke at Chicago, why is his memorial here at Kanyakumari?

A: One who was born at Calcutta was Narendranatha Datta and Naren discovered the Vivekananda in himself, by understanding the purpose of his life while meditating here. He went to America to achieve that purpose.

Q: But why he came here to meditate, all the way from Calcutta?

A: He did not come here to meditate. He came here as a wandering monk and felt like reaching the rock to review his experiences of three and half years of wanderings across the country in December 1892.

Q: You just now said “he meditated” and now you are saying he had a review of his

experiences of wanderings across India. Can you please clarify this?

A: Yes, he meditated on what he saw then, in the contemporary India. He saw a contrast-India that was great and India that was ailing with many ills. He then wanted to know why we had fallen from the pinnacle of glory. Therefore, he meditated on India – the Motherland.

Q: Did he come to know the reason? What is it?

A: Yes, not only he understood the reason, he hit upon the remedy also. He then worked out a plan-you err....we are all part of that plan.

Q: Oh! Then, what is this remedy?

A: He found that we had strayed away from our spiritual heritage, we have disregarded our spiritual values, that is why we have fallen so low from the pinnacle of glory. The remedy for this is we have to retrace our steps and be rooted in spiritual values.

Q: Excuse me please, but I cannot understand this. Can we improve our lot by doing pujas, or visiting temples and following various vratas and vows? Can we face the enemies' attacks on our country by chanting mantras? Can we bring solace to our masses by observing festivals and rituals. Can we make our people strong by fastings, or wearing malas and doing japas?

A: Shiva Swarupananda smiled and said, “I understand your state of confusion, I will not call it confusion also, but we need to understand this word spirituality clearly. The spiritual moornings only have earned us our freedom from British Yoke. Now that

we are entering in the sixtieth year of freedom, we need to know this. We also need to know why we could not make ourselves free in 1857 itself. Why we had to struggle for ninety long years? In the first place why our brave forefathers were defeated, captured and enslaved by less competent invaders? Swami Vivekananda understood it. The society had slowly but consistently deviated from its spiritual moorings. Therefore, his message was “Raise India with the power of the Spirit”. By this time, all the students were facing Shiva Swarupananda with heart in their ears. He signalled them to sit on the sandy beach and continued with the conversation. If you understand this spirit, spirituality and being spiritual, you will hold the key to make India glorious. In our parlance, we are not to be limited by our physical identity, we are the spirit in this physical frame—Atma. The science or technique to know it and experience this reality is Adhyatma, that is spirituality, and living in this awareness and conducting ourselves in all walks of life is being spiritual--leading a spiritual life. So please understand that being spiritual or leading a spiritual life is independent of visits to temples, following rituals, observing fasting, vratas and japas. One can do this as a personal choice but for being spiritual one has to do something more, rather put a step forward.

A young student immediately asked, “what is it? How it is linked to our having fallen consistently in the past?”

Yes, my boys, you should ask and get to know of it. Our scriptures say a spiritual person is one who identifies himself with larger entities--from identity with the family

to identity with the society, and then with the nation. Then only one can further evolve to identify oneself with the whole creation and ultimately the Creator — God. As a reflection of this evolution, the evolved person will not be selfish or narrow-minded. Such a person will sacrifice all personal gains for the benefit of people around. Such an Adhyatmik person will not fight or think of taking revenge on our own people and never through the invaders and enemies of the Nation. These spiritual persons cannot be bribed or threatened to work against society and nation. They are fearless, not afraid or worried of even Death. Thereby they will have tremendous strength and energy.

A student immediately nodded and said, “Yes! I have read in our history, our kings were strong and rich enough to face the invaders, but more than often we lost our battles through treachery and jealousy of people around them. The King’s relatives and sardars were either bribed or strategically won over by the invaders. Yes! In the history of medieval India it has been observed always. Jaychand Rthods and Mir Jaffars were many in number.

Another student came forward and said, “Even in the eighteenth century our kings invited the English and French to fight the wars among themselves and ultimately all of them were gobbled up by “the company” which emerged stronger than her other European counterparts. It is now clear that we were defeated and enslaved by the foreigners because we deviated from our spiritual legacy--oneness, unselfishness, service-mindedness and fearlessness”.

Shiva Swarupananda continued—our freedom fighters became fearless because

they had the conviction that we are not a body, we are Atma, which can never be killed or destroyed by the British regime. They smilingly went to the gallows and inspired many to follow them. Even from 1857 to 1947, the freedom movement was thwarted by the selfish police informers for petty prizes and favours like a government job.

In the post-Vivekananda Period-1892 onwards, people at the helm of affairs of the freedom movement took this Spiritual Baton from Swamiji and the freedom movement became mass-based. But in the post 1940 period, the advent of short sighted, selfish, narrow-minded leaders ushered in the partition of the country. Personal ambitions preceded over National interest and so the present situation of conflicts and clouds of neo-colonization are hovering over our heads. You must have read in the newspapers that even war-room secrets are being pilfered because selfish and corrupt people are very highly placed. Quite a few students got up and asked, "Our freedom is in danger. How can we proceed forth? What exactly we should do?"

Shiva Swarupananda nodded and said, "yes, it is here the message of Swamiji becomes more relevant now, than in the past. Swamiji had said, "Conquer yourself, and then the whole world will be at your feet". This conquering of ourselves is possible if we emulate the values enumerated in the Yoga Sastra, the Upanishads, and of course the Bhagawat Gita. This will enable us to conquer our likes and dislikes, narrow mindedness and selfishness. We will be able to forge a strong unity among likeminded persons, organizations and institutions", Swamiji used to say, "Bring all forces

positive together...". He used to say "National Union of India is consolidation of its scattered spiritual forces whose heart beat to the same tune". We should be able to respond to the tune echoed in Swamiji's heart, "Say Brother, every Indian is my brother and the good of India is my highest good". When he says modern India should be built on spiritual lines, he means based on these values which will consolidate the psyche of all the positively oriented minds. Swamiji had great faith in modern Indian youth. Then and then alone we can meet the challenges from profiteering designs of multinational companies, hideous and irreligious agendas of Semitic faiths, selfish designs of short-sighted politicians, when we imbibe the spiritual and cultural values of our country and strive for their upkeep. Now that we are set to observe the 150th Anniversary of the First War of India's Independence and 60th Year of Freedom, we should take this idea to more and more youth".

"I think this alone will be the true tribute to our freedom fighters, who gave up their lives for freeing India..." a student responded, followed by noddings by all other students in the group. Shiva Swarupananda said, "Incidentally today, the fourth July, is the anniversary of Mahasamadhi of Swami Vivekananda. He had assured that in spite of giving up the physical frame, his spirit will always guide us. Let us offer our *sankalpa* that we will take up his work.

Then, Shiva Swarupananda led the students towards the Vivekananda Mandapam in the nearby garden to offer their commitment at the feet of the Wandering Monk statue of Swami Vivekananda.



1 SOURCE OF STRENGTH 1

DR.K.SUBRAHMANYAM

Strength is essential. Strength is one thing. Awareness of strength is another. It is not enough if we are strong; we should also be aware of our strength. It is not enough if we are rich; we should also be aware of our richness. Our strength and wealth will be useless if we are not aware of their existence in us. Then, it makes no difference whether we have them or do not have them. Ramesh is a rich person. He has cash in his pocket. On the way to a hotel, his pocket is picked and his cash is lost. Ramesh has no knowledge of the loss. He goes to the restaurant; sits with confidence and eats like a lord. Praveen is a poor person. He has no money. He is hungry. He stands near a hotel. Somebody related to him goes close to him and thrusts into his pocket a thousand rupee note folded in a piece of paper. Poor Praveen is not aware of the cash in his pocket. He stands on the pavement and begs for alms, though he can afford to eat like a lord sitting in a restaurant. It is the awareness or ignorance that causes the feeling of richness or poverty. A rich person may be poor for want of awareness of his wealth. And a person without money may behave like a rich man on account of his ignorance of the strength of wealth.

Awareness of our culture, glory, and heritage is sure source of strength. This awareness of our country's wealth is called national pride. It makes us hold our heads



high with confidence and self-esteem. Neither in the past nor in the present, India and Indians have ever been poor. Unfortunately we are accustomed to underestimate our caliber and culture. We are others forgetting our greatness and glory. We think we are weak and poor, useless and unworthy. We Indians must first of all overcome this feeling of inferiority. Self-esteem and national pride are a sure source of strength and confidence. Modesty is no modesty if it kills our confidence. Humility at the cost of ability is but suicidal. Boastfulness is opium. Pride is poison. Conceit is but cancer. Similarly diffidence is a dreadful disease. Inferiority complex is an inexcusable crime. One should be aware of one's gifts, talents, abilities and potentialities.

Mother is mother, lovable and respectable, whether she is rich or poor, high or low. Each individual is an entity of self-esteem

and self-respect, irrespective of social or economic position. He or she cannot at any cost give up his or her human dignity and rights. More so, when one is of strength and wealth—physical, moral, cultural, intellectual, national and spiritual. Neither India nor any Indian has any reason to feel small or low, inferior or poor. It is nothing but one's ignorance and stupidity to feel weak and worthless. India is rich and Indians too are rich. There is no need to feel sorry about either of them. They are good and wealthy. But can be better and richer.

Swami Vivekananda after his triumphant trip to the West returned to India. As soon as he reached his Motherland at Rameswaram, he rolled on the sands there and wept with admiration and affection for Mother Bharat. Someone asked him "Sir, you are the son of this soil. What was your feeling towards your motherland before you left for the West and what is your estimate of her now that you have returned to her from the West? What is the difference? Do you find your Motherland to be different now?"

Swamiji replied:

"Earlier, I considered India only as my mother. So I loved her. I did not know her full greatness then. I simply loved her as any son would love his mother. But, now, I find her to be not a mere mother. She is Ratnagarbha. She is rich in every respect. Despite the foreigners' repeated plunder, she continues to be rich. Now, I find every particle of sand in India to be sacred, not merely lovable but venerable and adorable."

When we are not aware of our wealth and glory we are likely to become weak and

miserable. It is like a millionaire begging for alms. Strength, hidden strength is useless when we are not aware of it. Anjaneya unfortunately does not know his strength.

It is the self-esteem that has been injected into Sri Anjaneya when he is mild and passive unable to undertake the journey to Lanka in search of Sita Devi. The great Vanara warrior is unaware of his energy and ability. Jambavan is surprised to see the enthusiastic Anjaneya remaining inactive when he should actually seize the opportunity and fly to the island to find out the whereabouts of his Master's spouse. Jambavan therefore tells, "what young man? Why are you silent? It is your Master's work that requires your immediate attention and action. Neither yourself nor your master is of a lesser mettle. You have faith in your *prabhu* and Sri Rama has confidence in your abilities. That is the reason why he has given his ring to you and you alone. He is sure that you alone will certainly find out Sita. And the ring given by him is now with you. It is to be handed over to Sita. If you fail now to undertake the expedition, you cannot accomplish your work. Anjaneya, are you not the faithful servant of an able master? You are not only an accomplished messenger but a tempestuous warrior. You are the son of the wind god who is known for his irresistible impetuosity. When you were but a boy, you mistook the Sun for a red fruit and flew into the skies to swallow him. Have you forgotten your master, your father and your own self? You are not an ordinary person. You are a person of self-confidence. Self-reliance and self-esteem.

You belong to a family of unselfish philanthropists. You are known for your strength, courage, conviction and compassion. Come on, stand up, take a leap, fly. Find out Sita. Exhortation, electrifying exhortation is essential to rouse the dormant energy. The weapon to wake us up and make us act is the self-esteem, family prestige and national pride.

Arjuna has arrived on the battle field with enthusiasm to do away with the enemies. Suddenly he becomes despondent. He is frenzied. He is overcome by a strange psychic weakness. He drops his weapons and opts to withdraw from war. Sri Krishna then rises to the occasion and chides him, whips him with the weapon of self-esteem. He exhorts, "what man? Is it not unbecoming of you to be passive like this when you are supposed to be up and active. Will not the posterity laugh at you for your escapist tendency? Remember, you are born in the family of prince Bharata who has played with lions. You belong to the family of fighters. Don't you feel ashamed of your spineless speech and withdrawal? Man, get up. Shun this weakness. Be manly. Live up to the expectations of your nation, family and friends." Repeatedly Sri Krishna kindles in Arjuna a strong feeling of self-esteem.

Swami Vivekananda was on the lone rock at the southernmost tip of India amidst the three seas, contemplating over the plight of India. He was unhappy at the decline and decadence of the people. It is not a fall but a feeling of fall that has been haunting the people in India. If it is really an inability on the part of the people, there can be an excuse. As Anjaneya and Arjuna, the people of India are intrinsically strong. It is a

temporary phase of passive disposition that has turned them despondent for a while. India has never been a slave to alien forces. It has been but a struggle, may be mild struggle, on the part of Indians to assert themselves that has appeared to be submissiveness to the foreign yoke. The lingering fire of independence took time to become a huge flame of freedom struggle. And the foreigner had to quit. India can never be enslaved by anybody. Indians are born free and they breathe the free air of spiritual splendour. They are known for their spiritual self-esteem. And that was noticed by Swami Vivekananda. He had therefore chosen to rouse the fire of spirituality in us. If there is that blazing spiritual splendour, there will be grandeur in every field. Electricity makes many appliances effective and successful. So also the intrinsic spirituality is bound to make every Indian triumphant in any chosen field. In art and architecture, music and medicine, dance and drama, mathematics and martial arts, culture and civilization, education and economics, archery and astronomy, language and literature, religion and philosophy and science and spirituality India has ever been reigning supreme. Even today, India is rich. Indians are rich all over the world as exemplary economists, doctors, scientists and teachers. No field is left untouched by them and every subject is mastered by our people. It is not enough if we become rich, we must become aware of our wealth and achievements.

Self-esteem and national pride are the need of the hour. Swami Vivekananda, therefore, has chosen to give us the clarion call for self awareness and through it for national



Bank, Shri D. Bhanudas, General Secretary, Vivekananda Kendra said the jeep will join



the fleet for the service activities of Vivekananda Kendra, Rural Development Programme. He explained to the audience the service activities of the Kendra all over India.

BANGALORE

'Guru Poornima' was celebrated with an intense fervour on 11th July 2006. There were various programmes throughout the

day such as Chandihoma in the morning, inauguration of free coaching classes for college students in the afternoon and speech by Swami Sadathmananda of Arsha Vidya Kendra on the importance of Guru in our life. Besides, there was a skit presented by members of Mahila Daksha Samiti and a painting exhibition.

KALLUBALU

On 4.7.06, Swami Vivekananda's punyathithi was observed. All the students and staff offered flowers at the feet of Swami Vivekananda's picture.

On 10.7.06, Guru Poornima was celebrated with huge enthusiasm and devotion. There were speeches on the importance of Guru by Sri Prasadji and Smt.Sunanda. Besides, there were other programmes, such as elocution competition for teachers and chanting of Guru Shloka. Nearly 350 people participated in the programmes.





VIVEKANANDA KENDRA SAMACHAR

RDP

4th July 2006 was observed as the Samadhi Day of Swami Vivekananda and also as the Anna Pooja day. On this day, Vivekananda Kendra Rural Development Programme successfully completed its 25th year of service. The Kendra's well wishers, Balvadi teachers and distinguished guests congregated in the Patanjali Yoga Hall of Vivekanandapuram.



Shri Ramesh Buthada, President of the Hindu Dharma Foundation and his wife were the chief guests of the function. The function was inaugurated by Shri Buthada by lighting the sacred lamp. It was followed by various other programmes such as chanting of Aikya Mantra and Anna Poorna Stotram, and speeches by distinguished celebrities like Swami Kamalathmanandaji of Ramakrishna Math, Madurai. Various books in Tamil were released on that day and presented to the distinguished guests. The rice was collected from thousands of well wishers under the Kendra's Amrita Surabhi Scheme and worshipped as Goddess Annapurna after heaping it in the form of a small hill. The rice will be used for Balwadis and other service schemes of the Kendra. Mementoes were



handed over to the guests by Nivedita Didi and Aparna Didi. Nearly 800 people participated in this function.

The State Bank of India has gifted a BOLERO JEEP worth Rs. 4.72 lakhs to Vivekananda Kendra for its Rural Development activities in TamilNadu. A colourful function was organised at the Eknath Bhawan in Vivekanandapuram in the evening of 07.07.06. Shri Pradip Kumar, General Manager, Madras circle, handed over the keys of the new jeep to Shri D. Bhanudas, General Secretary, Vivekananda Kendra. Shri



Vaidhyan, Deputy General Manager, Agriculture Department of the Bank graced the occasion with his presence. Shri Sadashivam, Deputy Manager, Madurai Division welcomed the gathering. In his speech Shri Pradip Kumar explained the social service activities of the Bank. Accepting the jeep keys and thanking the