

The Call of Chicago

The year 1983 is momentous in Indian History, Conversely it contributed immensely towards further flowering of human civilization demonstrating newer processes to restore peace and amity through power of love, harmony and morality.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, later on the Mahatma or Great Soul, left the Indian shores for South Africa on April, 1893, just on a professional call, Swami Vivekananda, later on the Great Indian Monk, embarked on a journey to the United States of America on 31st May, 1893 and Aurobinda Acroind Ghose, later on the Great Indian Savant Sri Aurobinda returned to India from England on 6th February, 1893, to show ways and means to achieve 'divinity' in man.

The nation has justifiably celebrated the 150th year of birth of the revolutionary Great Indian Monk Swami Vivekananda in the recent past. This is not only to remember him and show our respect and gratitude to him for bringing immense glory to the nation, but also to make people aware of him and his, achievements and contributions towards raising our moral standard and working for restoration of human dignity and harmony, and eradication of illiteracy and poverty, particularly in our country. The celebrations also reminded us about his relentless endeavors and sacrifice for us and his expectations from us demonstrating in the process his methodology of work, to be emulated by us for benefit of all. An Intellectual to the core he was not only a Visionary but immensely pragmatic and his establishment of the Vedanta Mission in the West and Ramakrishna Mission in the East - demonstrated the real necessities of the two (2) worlds - wisdom for the west to learn how to utilize their rich for benefit to fellow brings, etc., and Relief for the poverty stricken East. While embarking on his first American sojourn he wrote to his fellow-Monk Swami Turiananda - "The poverty of our people is pricking me. That is why I am going to America. Let me find out what I can do there to help our unfortunate fellow - brethren here".

We can recall here Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's observations to the Editors of a famous Bengali Journal 'Bijali' - "I may better be remembered as the founder of 'Sriniketan' (Institute for creating of jobs through learning of crafts) and better agriculture methods. People are asking for food. We shall have to arrange for that. Gandhiji tried to preserve the dignity of individual and as such desired that God should come in the form of wage and food, to the needy.

Many events mark the brilliant, dedicated, unfortunately short illustrious career of Swamiji, but the event that stands outstanding is

his appearance, participation and inspiring, thought provoking speeches at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in on 11th September, 1893. In fact he, altogether, gave quite a number of speeches at various sessions and days of the Congregation, but his opening address - 'Sisters and Brothers of America' - not only electrified and enthralled the whole audience, but helped him to occupy a permanent place in the hearts of thinking Americans and the significance of the address echoed the Vedantic doctrines of equality of all having a single origin 'Amritasaya Putra' - 'Children or part of the Sublime (God) and there is no difference among us'. Earlier before, at such an international exposure or platform, all talked about from a sectarian approach. But Swamiji broke the barrier - the heart opened out to the other hearts - 'Jagat Asi' Setha Kariche Kolakuli' (Togore) - or 'Universal Brotherhood' (Tagore again). The speech also revealed his Guru or Religious Teacher and Mentor Sri Ramakrishna's main theory - 'Jata Mat, Tata Path' - or in the ultimate realization and position all lead to the same one or source - for varied ideas man follows a different path but every one's aim is to reach to the God - as ultimate destination of the river is to mingle with the sea".

Naturally while taking into account the celebrations the question that naturally comes, to one's mind is what tangible we had done or achieve or whether we have been able to change the pathetic scenario that obtains till now. We shall engage ourselves in low bickerings yet spend crores of dearer rupees for self-deception.

Mahatma Gandhi, the other spokesman of Harmony, wrote that 'a tree has so many branches but their root is only one'. By this both Gandhiji and Swamiji tried to mean and emphasize not only on the tolerance of others' views, but also try to find out the good in all and adopt it for enrichment of own views. As the situation stands today, throughout the globe dissensions, strife and skirmishes due to divergence of opinions, religious intolerance, false sense of supremacy and self-aggrandizement against good of all, prevailing everywhere, the significance and necessity of Swamiji's Speech comes as a great relief and right path - setter.

Swami Vivekananda was the symbol of tolerance and radicalism. No narrow and sectarian views in any field of life and living touched him. This could be revealed in his lecture on the 3rd day of the Parliament of Religions devoted to different religions of the world. Swamiji naturally dwelt on the Hindu Religion which he always, upheld in his heart and mind because of its loftiness, tolerance, liberalism and resilience that embraced in it all the religious of the world. While composing a poem and song on India - 'Bharat Tritha' - Gurudev

Rabindranath Tagore sang - "Here Aryans and Non - Aryans, Hindus and Muslims,... Saks, Huns, Pathans and Mughals, all mingled in a single identity".

Next he spoke about the high ideals of the 'Adwaitabodh' - Non - Dualism or oneness of existence'. He told that while most of the ancient civilizations had perished Indian Civilization had survived because of its 'Liveliness'. Here we can think about a necessary social process - 'Sustainable Development' or permanance of economic endeavors with moral attitude and Swami Vivekananda's views, based on the Vedantic Philosophy and Principles', do hold that approach and working for 'inclusive growth', which we either ignored or failed to emphasize.

Swami Vivekananda was a Sanayasia not in the ordinary sense of the term or even perception, but a 'Karmayogi' - Constructive Work personified - who gave his all to transform the whole world to a blissful existence by giving the Upanishadic Clarion Call - "Uttistatha Jagrata Prapya Baranvata - Arise, Awake, Obtain the Coveted". Mahatma Gandhi observed that Swami Vivekananda not only was among very few who heralded the Indian renaissance, but inspired him to fight for Freedom - not only from the British Yoke, but in other senses of concept also. Our salutations to the Master.