



PRSS-8 Religion for the Youth

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It is our culture to commence any endeavor with an invocation. True to this tradition let us commence (this 'World congress on Vedic Sciences' and) this presentation with a Vedic invocation.

OM sahanaa vavatu saba nau bhunaktu.
Saba veeryam karavaa vahai.
Tejas winaa vadhee taastu maa vid yishaa vahai. OM shaantih
shaantih shaantih

Om = God. I protect us all together 'make us all enjoy together'. I Allow us all work together' - 'make our study brilliant'. 'May we all not hate each other'.
Om = God, Peace... ..peace... ..peace

YOU, the youth of this great nation are indeed blessed to be born on this sacred soil of India. You can be greatly proud to be Indians. YOU, the Youth of India are bearing the torch of a grand civilization, one of the oldest in this world. You are the descendants of a great culture Bharatya Culture - which people of other cultures and nations adore even today. This culture is the most secular culture of this world. In your blood runs the wisdom of our forefathers, the great Rishis/sages, who propounded this Indian culture - a way of life - known as 'Sanathana Dharma'.

India is a great nation, a nation that gave birth to the oldest religion of this world, 'Sanathana Dharma' now known as Hinduism. The exact period of its origin is debated. Hinduism is the mother of all religions. India is also the land, which gave birth to few more religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Hinduism is the only religion, which is comprehensive and all-inclusive. It embraces all the religions and enhances its own beauty. It has a tremendous capacity to absorb and assimilate any noble thoughts coming from any direction. It is said that Saint Thomas, a direct disciple of Jesus Christ came to the Kerala coast in India in the first century, 52 AD, and preached Christianity. We accepted the teachings of Love and compassion of Jesus. One thousand years later India was invaded by rulers of Central Asia (Genghis Khan & Ghazni Mohamed), and spread their religion. Thus for hundreds of years India was under foreign rule first by the Moguls and later by the British. During this period India was looted and its culture crushed. Yet India had the resilience to survive these onslaughts and assimilated their noble thoughts, philosophy, art & music of those foreign invaders & rulers. Hence ours is a culture of fusion of many cultures. India gave **zero** to the world in mathematics in the physical science and also gave the concept of **Soul** to the world in the metaphysical science. Are we not proud and happy to be sons and daughters of this great Nation? Yes, we are and we should be.

You, the youth of India were born in a free India after our Independence on 15-08-1947. You are lucky and blessed that you have no taste of slavery to foreign rule. Youth is the most beautiful and fascinating stage in one's life. Today you may feel that it is a struggle to be young. But later in life you will



reminiscence the unforgettable sweet memories of the young days, months and years. Hence every moment of the youth must be spent for the glory of our Nation building & the precious memories cherished in the mind. It must be remembered that youth force in the world is the greatest and the strongest force. You can do wonders. You can change the face of this world and make it the heaven of humanity & paradise of joy and happiness. You are the storehouse of tremendous energy and power. You have the power of an Atom in fusion and fission. When the atom is split, in the atomic power plant, it can produce tremendous electric power for the human development. The same atom, when split in the atomic bomb can destroy humanity. YOU Be that positive and creative atom for human development.

You are the destiny makers of tomorrow's India. You are the future leaders of our great nation. You are the molders of India's future history. You are the torchbearers of our grand culture; spoke persons for our forefathers, who gave the 'life philosophy' to the entire humanity. In short you are the future hope of India. It is in your hands to regain the past glory of India. It is only YOU, who can prepare India to become the noblest, the richest, and the strongest Nation on this earth within the coming 20 years, as dreamt by our beloved President Shri. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Therefore awake, arise and stop not till this goal is reached.

We are living in an exciting Era of Science & Technology. We have passed through Stone Age, Agricultural age & Industrial Age. Now we are in the Knowledge & Information Age. During the past one hundred years we have made fantastic progress in Science & Technology, un-paralleled in the past 3,000 to 5,000 years of known history. During the past 20th century we made more progress than all the material progress made before that in thousands of years. Human population has now crossed 6 billion and is still growing fast. Man landed on the Moon and returned safely. We have discovered the farthest 10th Planet 'QUAOAR' in our Solar System and are exploring all the planets yonder in the vast space. We are exploring the Stars, which are billions of light years away, through powerful "Hubble Telescope". With the help of electron microscope we are able to reveal the secrets of Gene, the building block of human body in the Genetic Engineering. Cloning of human being is being attempted. Science & Technology has given comforts to man, but not happiness. Man has gained knowledge but not wisdom.

Man is able to see and explore the "External World" (outer world) but alas he does not have time to recognize his own "Inner world", which is vaster than the outer world.

A holistic human personality consists of 3 salient constituents viz., 1. Body, 2. Mind & Intellect and 3. Spirit. Majority of us recognize only BODY as a whole human personality. Minority of us thinks that Body, Mind & Intellect are the human personality. But only a few of humanity comprehend the Holistic Human Personality consisting of Body, Mind & Intellect & Spirit. (mind & intellect are one and the same like two sides of the same coin). Body is the grossest, which can be perceived by our 5 sense organs like eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. Body can not function without the sanction of mind and intellect. Mind and intellect can not function without the power of the Spirit. Body is gross; mind is subtle (abstract); and Spirit is the subtlest (like ice, water & steam).

India is one of the world's most respected sources of Knowledge & Information on "Life" in the sense of metaphysics. The human mind is capable of understanding the physical world and also grasping the metaphysical realities. What are the sources of this Knowledge & information on Life? Who are the Authors and the 'Intellectual Property Right Holders' of this universal knowledge? The source of this physical & metaphysical knowledge is the four "Vedas" & the "Upanishads". Who wrote them? The ancient Sages sat in contemplation for years and did 'subjective' research on Inner Life and found some Truth. Those profound truths were kept deep in their minds and reflected upon them again and again. How many Rishis and for how long did they do this subjective research? We do not know. There were many Rishis who did this contemplative research for hundreds and thousands of years. The cumulative result is the Vedas & Upanishads (known as Vedanta). These Vedic Stikas were first in the minds of various sages. They sang them and passed on to succeeding generations through word of mouth. Then they wrote on palm leaves and then on paper. Those ancient sages were so magnanimous that they did not leave their names and claim royalty. They were immaculately selfless with dignity. It was Sage Veda Vyasa who edited and codified them, from their scattered forms and put them into some order. Their priceless gift of this knowledge will be cherished by humanity forever. This is our rich spiritual heritage.

These Vedas & Upanishads are highly philosophical and are unparalleled in their depth and incisiveness. Those high thoughts of Vedas and Upanishads were beyond the reach of the common man's mind. Knowing this our forefathers wrote Epics like Ramayana & Mahabharata and many Puranas in the form of simple and long stories imbibing those deep philosophical thoughts for the common men to understand and follow in life. The high thoughts of our ancient scriptures were spread to every nook and corners of our Bharat in the form of Rishi kathas, indigenous operas, puppet shows, Villu pattus, etc. Our villagers, though uneducated and unsophisticated knew the Dharmic way of life through this horizontal spread of our scriptural values. Ramayana and Mahabharata are particularly edifying in extolling virtuous conduct in delineating the right path and in isolating all undesirable thoughts, words and deeds. These various scriptures cover the widest canvas of life offering best guidance on worldly life. Therefore Hinduism is called more a 'way of life' than a religion. Only due to this phenomenon that our 'way of life' or Hindu Culture or Hindu Religion survived for one thousand years, in spite of foreign rule by Moguls and British. Our Bharathiya culture withstood the crude shock and survived.

Indian rich spiritual heritage is manifold and is transmitted by various means. Vedas are the basis of the Hindu way of life. The wide spectrum of devotional literature by people (like Tulsidas, Kambar, Thiruvalluvar, Avvaiyar, Nayanmars, Azhvars, Akkamahadevi, Allama Prabhu, Purandara Dasa, Saitanya Prabhu, Basaveswara, Thyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshidar & S. IDa Sastri) is an enduring testimony to the piety of saints, preceptors and visionaries. They have led from different walks of life and bequeathed to posterity a rich devotional tradition to follow. In ancient India anything anybody did either in art, sculpture, literature, poetry, music or dance, was in the praise of God - the all pervading and the Omniscient.



Yes, we have had a glorious past, Indian civilization was grand, Bharathiya culture was great, Indian spiritual values were adorable, Indian joint family life was worth living and worth emulating, Indian scriptures were precious & priceless. But look at the present Modern India. Where: are we with respect of our past glory? Can we sit and relax thinking always about the glory of the past? Let us do some retrospection.

India is one of the poorest countries in the world today with a population of over one billion. One in every 6th human in this world is an Indian. About 30% of us live below poverty line. 40% of us still can't read and write. Corruption is rampant in all walks of life. We are greedy. Why? What happened to our genius & our ethos? We are lost in the flood of our past glory and the modern rat race. Let us wake up to the present reality and search for our moorings and re-establish / rebuild a strong edifice over the 'already laid strong foundation'. We want to ape others without any connection to our culture and way of life. We are greedy and lost our priorities. We are losing our strong moral values, bonded family life, and are looking out for short cuts and quick fixes. We simply want to ape the materially affluent West. That has become our only obsession, goal and top priority. No doubt that we must have material prosperity, but not at the cost of our happiness, which must be our goal and priority. As we advance in science and technology we enhance our standard of living, but we tend to ignore the standard (quality) of life.

Modern living offers a variety of distractions, particularly for the youth, like continuous mini & mega soap operas on TV, unrestricted adult mass movies, alcohol, smoking, drugs, excessive rap music, junk fast food, computer Internet addiction and the like. They are not bad, if indulged in moderation. TV & cinema are the best and the most effective media of communication & learning. If viewed selectively we can learn and enjoy a lot. Medicinal Alcohol is all right, but drugs are to be avoided. Melodious music is indeed 'meditation' and is welcome. But loud noise is bad. Satwic food is desirable. Internet in our computer is a boon and a window to the world of information. But it has undesirable information too, which is often viewed by the young & the old alike. These distractions take us away from our righteous living and lead us into stress and tension filled life.

Swami Chinmayananda used to echo time and again that the youth of India are not useless, but used less; they are not careless but cared less. This is very true and the Youth Energy of India must be properly channeled to make India a great nation again. How do young Indian look at himself / herself and India? The youth of India is confused and is direction-less. The Central and State Governments, parents and teachers are responsible for the youth's dilemma. They must be cared and used properly, so that they can grow well and bring back the past glory to India.

The youth, in general revolts against and rejects Religion, the world over. There are exceptions of course. To them religion is only for the old, who are nearing their grave. They think that religion talks about liberation or 'Mukhti', after death. "Why worry now and let us wait till we are to meet death in old age", they say. They ask, "Why should we reject or give up desires. Strong desires are the cause for our progress". They look around and see 'superstition' working in all walks of life. Their rational and analytical

mind questions, often without getting proper answer. The simplest answer for them is to reject religion. There is a large gap between the proper knowledge of religion and the youth. This makes them more vulnerable to be attracted towards consumerism and materialism. The present satellite communication, cable TV, Internet, & mobile phone, have taken them nearer to materialism, far away from spirituality. Right from the pre-school level Indian youth are given improper education, modeled by British Mr. Mcholey some 150 years ago. Religion is a part of our life and will ever remain so. Religion and culture are synonymous and is inseparable part of our life. Religion must be taught in school for all. Hindus can be taught Hinduism; Muslims Islam, and Christians Christianity and all can be taught universality of religion also. In the name of secularism we are denying the basic needs of man, viz., Religion. This is the dilemma all over the world, except for some Islamic countries, where they teach religion in schools. Till we are able to teach religion in school, it should be taught as an extra curricular subject. Present education system prepares one for getting a job, but not for learning how to live a good life. When the joint-family system is breaking, it is all the more important to learn morality, values, and inner life in schools. Religion, like discipline is not sought voluntarily, but it must be taught or motivated or forced. Parents should assume greater role in infusing spiritual education and values to their children.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

Man seeks God. That is religion. But man is said to be already divine. To realize this divinity in him is religion. Religion is 'philosophy-in-action'. Man has diverse methods to reach God or realize his own divinity. Vedas are the basis of our religion, Hinduism. Many more religions came up in the past many hundreds of years. Lord Buddha, who was King Gowthama, gave Buddhism to this world about 2500 years ago. Various Prophets and masters developed Judaism, Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Shintoism & Islam. The goal of each religion is to seek God and live happily. All these various religions are like various rivers originating from different places, flowing through different routes, smooth and rough, but ultimately merging into the mighty ocean of one God-hood. Their goal is the SAME, though they all follow different paths and methods.

To proclaim this universality of all Religions, and to promote the inter-religious tolerance, a grand "Parliament of Religions" was organized in the city of Chicago, USA in September 1893. Here, various religious heads spoke on behalf of their own religion. But it was Swami Vivekananda, who not only spoke for Hinduism, but for the entire humanity. He was just 30 years old. He had no prepared text. He had stage fear to speak to such an elite audience. But he mustered courage, stood up with folded hands, and offered salutations to Goddess Saraswathi, in silence, and addressed with deep and clear voice, "MY DEAR SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF AMERICA". The entire audience stood up spontaneously, cheered and offered a thunderous applause for time 5 minutes. He meant what he said. The words came from the depth of his heart and from the core of his inner self. Thus he won their hearts and established a subconscious telepathy between his mind and the minds of the audience in the hall and through them to the entire humanity. He roared like a lion revealing the truths of VEDANTHA, the divinity of all humanity, rich and poor, sinner and saint. He told to each one



of us to see divinity in every human being. He did not stop there, but wanted us to see divinity in the animals, plants, and stones and in every thing of creation. What a lofty ideal!

Religion is not for the old and the dying, as normally believed. It is for the YOUNG, to live a long and purposeful life right here in this world. With religion we can make a heaven out of hell, right in your home. Without religion you will make a hell out of heaven! Both are in your hands. Religion is nothing but your own life story, your autobiography. . Nowadays, if you go to any shop to buy any article, you are given instruction manual along with that article - radio, TV, Mixer, Cooker, washing machine, computer, even washing soap. These instruction manuals give you directions to set up and operate and maintain. Similarly, Vedantha is a well-prepared manual telling you how to live a purposeful and a happy life in this world. This manual was written / evolved by the great Rishis after many years of life experimentation, and subjective research through meditation.

Books never make Religions, but Religions make books. Religion is not to be just known or read or heard but it is to be practiced and realized. If the room is dark, strike a light, darkness goes. As long as mankind "thinks", there will be religions and sects. Variation is the sign of life. What are nations but multiplied individuals? There are various grades of mind. If there is an ideal religion, it must be broad and large enough to supply food for all these minds. Unity in variety / diversity is the plan of the universe.

As existence man, woman, animals, plants and stones are all ONE with the universe. That universal existence is GOD. In Him we are all one, but in His manifestation we are different. Lake or pond water poured into a cup, a jar, a bucket takes the form of the container vessels of different shape but water is same in all vessels. Water is GOD, (the same in all vessels) the different shapes are His varied manifestations. Any formula to harmonize religious creed to ONE will succeed if it does not destroy (pull down) the individuality of a man in religion. Do not destroy but build. . If you cannot build, please stand by with your folded hands and see things GO ON smoothly. A Religion, which can satisfy all variety of humanity, can only stand the test of time and survive. Others will perish. That religion will be called an UNIVERSAL RELIGION which can satisfy the mind of a philosopher, the mind of an emotional devotee, the mind of an active worker, the mind of a mystic, the mind of a king, and the mind of a farmer:

Our scriptures talk about four paths to attain God-hood viz., Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. YOGA IS UNION. UNION BETWEEN MAN AND God; between Jeevathma and Paramathma; between lower and higher self; between work and worship; between lover and the beloved; etc., A man who seeks this union between two is called a YOGI. Karma yogi, Bhakti yogi, Raja yogi and Jnana yogi.

We find that there are three instruments of KNOWLEDGE for all beings, namely, INSTINCT, REASON, AND INSPIRATION. Instinct belongs to animals; reason to man and inspiration to God-man or super man. A man may have all three in different degree. From a instinctive man let us move on to a reasoning man and from there graduate into an inspired man of God-hood.

Religion is not just going to temple and ringing the bell and doing "arathi"; or going to the church and kneeling down before the cross in confession; or going to the Mosque for doing "Namaz" mechanically. Again..religion is not a bundle of ideas or theories or doctrine. All these are the beginning of religion. They are all needed. But they are not the ends. What then is religion? You are blessed that you are born, born with a purpose, a purpose to serve and evolve. Man, You are not a worm, you are a lion. You can go to the moon and return back to where you belong; you can fly in the air like a bird; you can swim and dance like a dolphin in the sea and cross the Ocean.

You are the melody in the music; the fragrance in the Jasmine flower. You are pure and divine. Realization of this divinity in YOU is true Religion.

The ideal of "Every" human being is to be a good 'person'. This is religion. There is no 'quick fix' to be good. One has to strive and do 'sadana' to acquire this trait / character. This is religion. Religion is not something high-tech, which only a few very intelligent persons can achieve. Religion is simple and can be practiced by every one with ease. Spirituality is within each one of us, lying dormant. We are to just kindle and awaken it to glow and shine. We toil hard for our worldly life each day. We must also work, concurrently for our spiritual life. Worldly life is like a beautiful rose flower and spiritual life is like its fragrance. Our worldly life, devoid of our spiritual life is like a plastic flower without the sweet scent. Spirituality is the higher dimension of religion. It is the quality and essence of religion. When we embark on a journey towards religion and spirituality, sinful thoughts, bad words and dreadful deeds will diminish progressively and the values of life will gain ascendancy and make our life happy, peaceful and blissful. You have the freedom to make the choice about the type of life you want for yourself.

Let us conclude with a Vedic Universal Prayer:

Om asato maa sadgamaya
Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya Mrtymoraa amrtam gamaya..
Om shaantih. .Shaantih... Shaantih

OM = God Lead us from untruth to truth,
From darkness to light,
From death to immortality.
Peace... peace... peace.