

INDIA CAN SHOW THE WAY TO THE WORLD THROUGH ITS PHILOSOPHY OF 'UNIVERSAL ONENESS': VICE PRESIDENT

Relevant for: null | Topic: Globalization and Social Change - Effects of globalization on Indian society

The Vice President, Shri Venkaiah Naidu today suggested that the Indian worldview of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' can show the way for the contemporary problems facing humanity. In a global context where the social fabric of many countries and communities are being eroded by hatred, violence, bigotry, sectarianism and other divisive tendencies, the age-old Indian philosophy of 'Universal Oneness' has a special relevance, he observed.

Exhorting that there is quintessentially a democratic ethos in the Indian way of life, Shri Naidu said we see each individual as important as another. He added that our civilizational values recognize the vibrant variety in human beings and that there is no inherent conflict in this diversity as we are part of the same 'divinity'. The Vice President suggested that such a world view brings about mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and collaborative effort to achieve progress sustainably and inclusively.

Shri Naidu was making these observations during the virtual book launch of "Not Many, But One" (Two Volumes), an English translation of poems of Sree Narayana Gurudev by Prof G.K. Sasidharan. Recalling the saint's enormous influence on modern India, the Vice President said Sree Narayana Guru was "was a multifaceted genius, a great Maharshi, an eloquent proponent of Advaita philosophy, a talented poet and a great metaphysician".

The Vice President further highlighted the role of Sree Narayana Guru as a remarkable social reformer. He was at the forefront of the temple entry movement and against the social discrimination of untouchables. Consecrating a Siva idol amidst protest from bigoted traditionalists, he provided the impetus to Vaikom agitation and drew nationwide attention and appreciation from Mahatma Gandhi. Sree Narayana Guru also emphasized the practice of ideals of cleanliness, promotion of education, agriculture, trade, handicrafts and technical training as a part of the Sivagiri pilgrimage, Shri Naidu noted.

The saint guru believed that the world was permeated by one universal spirit, a common divine energy that resided in every human being and creature in this universe, the Vice President remarked. He captured this essence of Indianness in his poems and underlined the unity that lies beneath the world's apparent diversity. "For Narayana Gurudev, there is only "One Caste, One Religion, One God for All" (Oru Jathi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam, Manushyanu)", Shri Naidu said. This philosophy formed the basis for his reform movements, which sought to remove inequalities and social distortions.

The Vice President described Sree Narayana Guru as one of the most influential saints of modern India, who had propagated India's unique vision of harmony, peaceful coexistence and respect for diversity. Shri Naidu also spoke of his genius for intuitively knowing the potential of science and technology. He noted his contributions to metaphysics as a mystic contemplating the origin of the universe and quoted a few examples of his mystic insights.

Appreciating the efforts that have gone into producing the two volumes by the author and the publisher, Shri Naidu said that books like these can contribute to a deeper understanding of the roots of India's civilizational values. The readers in India as well as across the globe will get a glimpse of the extraordinary universality and the breadth of Indian vision, he added.

Shri Naidu concluded by suggesting that we have to discover and rediscover such innumerable gems by delving into our rich treasure house of cultural history. He urged the youth of the nation to go through publications such as this and understand the underlying message. Through this, he hoped that the younger generation will 'appreciate the soul of India' in this process and become a generation that is 'more aware of its inheritance'. "No nation can move forward by forgetting its culture and heritage", the Vice President reminded.

Prof G.K. Sasidharan, the author of the book, Shri R.K. Krishna Kumar, Trustee, Tata Trusts, Shri N Srinath, CEO, Tata Trusts, Shri Anil Dharkar of Penguin Random House were among the dignitaries present during the virtual event.

Following is the full text of the speech:

"I am happy to be here this evening with all of you to release the book 'Not Many but One'.

I am very pleased that Tata Trusts has taken this initiative and has supported the publication of this authentic version of all the works of Sree Narayana Gurudev.

I compliment Penguin Random House for bringing out these two volumes in a very impressive format.

Narayan Guru was a multifaceted genius, a great Maharshi, an eloquent proponent of Advaita philosophy and a talented poet who composed sublime poetry in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil. A remarkable social reformer, he was in the forefront of the movement for universal temple entry and against the societal ills like the social discrimination of untouchables. Above all these, he was one of the greatest metaphysicians the world has ever seen.

Narayana Gurudev provided the impetus for Vaikom agitation which drew nationwide attention and appreciation from Mahatma Gandhi. He was a true sage who dedicated his entire life to the welfare of humanity. For him, the world was permeated by one universal spirit, by a common divine energy that resided in every human being and in fact in every creature in this universe. He captured the essence of Indianness in his poems which highlighted the unity that lies beneath the world's apparent diversity.

Dear sisters and brothers,

The iconic sage of Sivagiri, who consecrated Siva idol amidst protest from bigoted traditionalists, the pragmatic social activist who emphasized the practice of ideals of cleanliness, promotion of education, agriculture, trade, handicrafts and technical training as a part of the Sivagiri pilgrimage, the prolific writer who published 45 works including translations of Ishaavaasya Upanishad and Thirukkural is a shining star in India's long and illustrious lineage of spiritual leaders. He is one of the most influential saints of modern India who have sought to reinforce and propagate India's unique vision of harmony, peaceful coexistence and respect for diversity.

This ancient Indian vision is articulated through diverse art forms like music, dance, art and architecture.

It forms the heart of the messages conveyed through poems and discourses by the saint-philosophers like Narayana Gurudev.

It provides the basis for social reform movements that seek to remove the inequalities and dysfunctional distortions that threaten social cohesion and progress.

This is a vision that has deep spiritual well springs contained in the immortal epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, in the Vedas and the Upanishads, in the Puranas and the Itihasas and is most recently amplified in the works of sages like Narayana Gurudev.

The world view of India essentially centres around the one-ness of all living beings because we believe that “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (The whole world is one family) and “Ekam Sat, Vipraah bahudhaa vadanti” (Truth is one, though wise men describe it in multiple ways). We also believe, as the Ishaavaasya Upanishad states in its opening line, “Ishaavasyam idam sarvam” (The whole universe is manifestation of the divinity).

If you look at it from the socio-political dimension, this is the quintessence of a democratic ethos where each individual is as important as another. It is a recognition of unity in diversity as well as celebration of one-ness in a plural world.

We, in India, have traditionally recognized that there is a vibrant colourful variety in human existence and since each particle in this universe is animated by the same divine energy, there need not be any conflict. The diversity adds to the richness of our existence and enlivens our lives. This world view paves the way for mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and collaborative effort to achieve progress sustainably and inclusively.

Narayana Gurudev’s works are hymns that reverberate with this spirit of one-ness which is why I find the title of these two volumes quite appropriate- Not many but One. For Narayana Gurudev, there is only “One Caste, One Religion, One God for All” (Oru Jathi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam, Manushyanu). The diversity we see around us has a basic unity we must constantly realize.

Narayana Gurudev is a mystic who contemplates on the origin of this universe and the concept of Advaita or non-duality or the non-differentiation between the Atma and the Paramatma. The author of these two volumes being a physicist by training and a devoted student of Narayana Gurudev, has brought in a very interesting comparison of the metaphysical insights of the sage with the latest discoveries in physics. Vedanta seems to be converging with the quantum theory. Mystical insights come close to the latest theories in string theory and the many worlds concept.

The author places Sree Narayana among the greatest spiritual leaders like Veda Vyasa and Adi Sankara. Indeed, he truly is a great philosopher and an accomplished poet like the other two.

Sree Narayana Gurudev intuitively knew the potential of science and technology and had insisted that science and technology be included as an integral part of the Sivagiri pilgrimage conventions.

The quest is endless be it in physics or in metaphysics. Scientists seem to have so far discovered only 4 to 5 percent of what is there in the universe. The remaining 95 to 96 percent is categorised as dark matter- 73 percent as dark energy and 23 percent as dark matter. The Vedas had, thousands of years ago, spoken of the vastness of the universe and how most of it is beyond human comprehension.

Sree Narayana Gurudev’s Adyaropa darsanam (Darsanamala) which explains the creation of universe, Daivadasakam and Atmopadesa satakam are a few examples of how the mystic reflections and insights closely resemble recent advances in physics.

These two volumes- Not Many but One – Neha Nanasti- is an invaluable compilation of the works of Narayana Gurudev that reveals the profound thoughts of an extraordinary mind and spiritual heights scaled by Gurudev. Prof. Sasidharan illumines the messages of the sage with

his own scholarly annotation and inter-disciplinary approach.

I am sure that these volumes can serve as a window to the ideas of one of the most revered saint-philosopher-reformers of modern India.

Gurudev's philosophy of Universal Oneness has special relevance in the contemporary global context where in the social fabric of many countries and communities are being eroded by hatred, violence, bigotry, sectarianism and other divisive tendencies.

Books like these can contribute to a deeper understanding of the roots of India's civilizational values. The readers within India as well as across the globe will get a glimpse of the extraordinary universality and the breadth of Indian vision. We have to discover and rediscover such innumerable gems by delving into our rich treasure house of cultural history.

It is gratifying to note that the Tata group which has established a number of pace setting institutions as a part of its nation building activities, has supported the publication of this excellent compilation. In some way, books like these help the present and future generations to appreciate the soul of India. It helps build a generation of citizens who are more aware of their inheritance.

I thank Shri Krishna Kumar ji for requesting me to launch these volumes today. My greetings to Prof. Sasidharan for accomplishing this onerous responsibility with so much devotion. My warmest felicitations to Shri Srinath, CEO, Tata Trusts and Shri Anil Dharkar of Penguin on their commitment to propagate the best in the grand Indian cultural repertory.

Jai Hind!"

MS/RK/DP

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