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VICE PRESIDENT SAYS BHAGAVAD GITA'S MESSAGE REMAINS EVER-RELEVANT; URGES RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO TAKE IT TO THE YOUTH AND THE MASSES

Relevant for: Ethics | Topic: Contributions of Moral thinkers and philosophers from India

The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu today inaugurated the Fifth Global Bhagavad Gita Convention virtually from Chennai and stressed the need to translate the universal message of Bhagavad Gita into as many languages as possible for the benefit of the entire humanity.

The Convention, which is being organised in online mode by the Centre for Inner Resources Development (CIRD), North America focuses on the theme of 'Mental Harmony'. Talking about the theme, Shri Naidu highlighted that mental stress is becoming an 'all-pervading phenomenon in modern times' and called for greater awareness and attention on the 'critical health issue'. He also said that even though the Bhagavad Gita is thousands of years old, its timeless message remains relevant to people, providing them guidance and help in restoring mental peace.

The Vice President observed that despite the prevalence of mental health issues, awareness remains low in India and there is a lot of stigma associated with it. Noting the pandemic's added impact on mental well-being of the people, he said that 'more than anything else, we must be willing to have public conversations about the importance of mental health'. Shri Naidu called upon popular figures from all fields 'to talk and raise awareness among people on this important public health issue.'

The Vice President expressed concern about instances of students ending their lives unable to cope with the stress caused by the pressures of studies. He highlighted the role of parents and teachers in counselling students, motivating them to face any adversity fearlessly, and to do their duty diligently without worrying about the result. 'This is the essence of the Upadesa given by Lord Sri Krishna to Arjuna', he said.

In this regard, Shri Naidu suggested that every educational institution must have in-house counsellors to help students overcome stressful situations. Governments everywhere must ensure compliance of this requirement, he added.

Appreciating the announcement by the Central government to launch a national tele-mental health programme to provide 24x7 free counselling to people, the Vice President said that 'this is an important step towards ensuring the mental well-being of people, especially those living in remote areas while ensuring their anonymity'.

Shri Naidu also called for a 'course correction in people's lifestyles' and to ensure a work-life balance for people's wellbeing. Suggesting measures like meditation, exercise, yoga to deal with stress, he emphasised the importance of spirituality in maintaining mental health. "I firmly believe that spirituality is essential to discover one's inner strength and mental peace. In this regard, I urge religious leaders to take the message of spirituality to the youth and the masses", he said.

Swami Bhoomananda Thirthaji, the founder of Narayanashrama Tapovanam and visionary behind Global Bhagavad Gita Conventions, Swami Nirvisheshananda Tirthaji of Narayanashrama Tapovanam, Honorable Ms. Justice Indira Banerjee of Supreme Court of India, Swamini Ma

Gurupriya of Narayanashrama Tapovanam, Shri Pankaj Bhatia , President CIRD-NA, Dr. Ravi Jandhyala, Vice- President of CIRD-NA and others attended the event.

Following is the full text of the speech –

“Sisters and brothers,

I am indeed very happy to participate in the fifth edition of the Global Bhagavad Gita Convention (GBGC 2022). I am pleased to note that the Centre for Inner Resources Development (CIRD), North America - a USA-based institution is organizing this convention, highlighting the global presence and recognition of our ethos and culture.

My humble respects to Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha Ji, who is the inspiration and the driving force behind this annual event!

Sisters and brothers,

The dialogue between Arjuna and his revered friend, philosopher and guide, Bhagwan Sri Krishna, on the plains of Kurukshetra, is one of eternal relevance. The gifted and wise Arjuna, who spent the better part of his life perfecting his skills and the strategies required for the battlefield, is confronted with crippling self-doubt on the first day of the great Mahabharata War.

Arjuna's sense of despondency arises from the fact that he sees his own kith and kin, his very own loving teachers and venerable elders, as a part of the opposing army. As he surveys the army of the adversary, his mind throws up doubts about the futility of the war that would annihilate his own relatives and people. Such is his despair that he loses all interest in the imminent battle and wishes to turn back.

That is when Sri Krishna, his charioteer and the guide by his side, counsels him, and painstakingly answers each and every question and concern that rises in Arjuna's mind.

Sri Krishna's lucid insights and perspectives enable Arjuna to shed his indecisiveness. After bouncing back into a state of effective performance, casting aside the doubts thrown up by his mind, Arjuna is able to move boldly ahead in the discharge of his Dharmic duties.

Sisters and brothers,

Although the message of the Bhagavad Gita is thousands of years old, it can never lose its currency or its importance. It remains a source of perennial guidance and inspiration to people. Today, more than ever, in a complex and interconnected world, the timeless message of the Bhagavad Gita remains relevant as people face numerous challenges and obstacles in their lives.

During a crisis, holy books such as the Bhagavad Gita provide guidance and help in restoring mental peace. They serve as a fountainhead of strength and faith and show us the way forward in difficult times.

Sisters and brothers,

In the wake of the unprecedented disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in the lives of people across the globe, I find the theme of 'Mental Harmony' for this convention to be very apt and timely. Mental harmony is an essential prerequisite for overcoming the stress and distress caused by the pandemic.

Unfortunately, mental stress is increasingly becoming an all-pervading phenomenon in modern times. Therefore, there is an imperative need to bestow greater attention by all stakeholders on this critical health issue. A reputed health journal had reported some years ago that 'one in seven Indians is affected by mental disorders of varying severity. Reports also show that there is a huge treatment gap in cases related to mental health in India.

Despite the prevalence of health issues like depression, awareness about mental health remains low. To make matters worse, unfortunately, there is a great deal of stigma associated with it.

It is not surprising that the pandemic too impacted the mental well-being of the people. I am happy to note the recent announcement by the Central government to launch a national tele-mental health programme to provide 24x7 free counselling and care to people. This is an important step towards ensuring the mental well-being of people, especially those living in remote areas while ensuring their anonymity.

Sisters and brothers,

We need to accord high priority to address all issues relating to mental health in a holistic manner. At the same time, it is equally important to create awareness to eradicate the stigma associated with it. More than anything else, we must be willing to have public conversations about the importance of mental health. Popular figures from all fields, in particular, must talk and raise awareness among people on this important public health issue.

Lastly, we must also introduce an element of course correction in our lifestyle. We need to step back from the pressures caused by modern life and ensure a work-life balance for people's wellbeing. It is now known that measures like meditation, undertaking regular exercise, practicing yoga, or listening to music act as stress-busters and help in relieving tension. In fact, they make our minds sprightly and active.

Friends,

It pains me to see instances of youngsters, particularly students ending their lives unable to cope with the stress caused by the pressures of studies. This is where the role of parents and teachers becomes critical. They must play a proactive role in counselling students who are unable to cope with academic pressures. In fact, every educational institution must have in-house counsellors to help students overcome stressful situations. Governments everywhere must ensure compliance of this requirement. Students must be motivated to face any adversity fearlessly and do their duty diligently without worrying about the result. This is the essence of the Upadesa given by Lord Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the battlefield. We must imbibe the essence of Lord Krishna's message and integrate it into our lives.

I firmly believe that spirituality is essential to discover one's inner strength and mental peace. In this regard, I urge religious leaders to take the message of spirituality to the youth and the masses.

I commend Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha ji and others for trying to spread the message of the Bhagavad Gita and stressing the importance of 'mental harmony' through this convention.

Sisters and brothers,

Lastly, I wish to state that the distilled wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita is for the benefit of entire humanity and efforts should be made to translate the message into as many languages as possible so as to enhance the reach of this seminal work.

We have always shared our civilizational knowledge with the world and we must continue to do so. As I often say, 'Share and Care' is the core of Indian philosophy. I am happy to see organizations such as CIRD-NA and the Global Bhagavad Gita Convention embodying this philosophy and striving hard to expose global audiences to these treasures.

Once again, I am very happy to have been part of this convention. I wish the fifth edition of the Global Bhagavad Gita convention all success. I am confident that the deliberations during the next three days will enlighten, educate and inspire everyone to seek inner peace.

Thank you. Namaskar.

Jai Hind!"

MS/RK/DP

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The Vice President observed that despite the prevalence of mental health issues, awareness remains low in India and there is a lot of stigma associated with it. Noting the pandemic's added impact on mental well-being of the people, he said that 'more than anything else, we must be willing to have public conversations about the importance of mental health'. Shri Naidu called upon popular figures from all fields 'to talk and raise awareness among people on this important public health issue.'

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In this regard, Shri Naidu suggested that every educational institution must have in-house counsellors to help students overcome stressful situations. Governments everywhere must ensure compliance of this requirement, he added.

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