



English rendering of PM's address at Dashamah Soundarya Lahari Parayanotsava Mahasamarpane in Bengaluru

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All the eminent personalities, ladies and gentlemen associated with Vedanta Bharati,

It is an old belief that whenever a Mantra is chanted together in a single voice at a place, a powerful energy is produced which engulfs the mind, the body and the soul. Nad-Brahma has been accepted in that very context. Even modern science does not deny the power of enchantment of the mantras. Today I can feel the same energy by these wonderful mantras of Dakshinamurthy and Soundarya Lahari in this environment. This divine sensation comprises of not only the nectar but also a mystery and an indomitable desire to unify with God.

Every Mantra of Soundarya Lahari reflects a different power and a different feeling. That spirit and power is filling us with the new consciousness, new energy in this moment. I am fortunate that I am a person who has been associated with Navratri for years and Soundarya Lahari is a part of my Navratri celebrations.

Bowing down to the supreme Sri Sri Shankar Bharati Mahaswami ji, I wish to express my gratitude to Vedanta Bharati. They invited me to join the programme and give this opportunity to spend some quality time here. I am fortunate to have got this opportunity to experience the lessons of Soundarya Lahari under Shri Shri Shankar Bharati Mahaswami ji. With the blessings of Swamiji Soundarya Lahari has completed 10 years.

Congratulations to all of you and best wishes from my side. I believe that you are lucky that you have become a part of this sacred task. Brothers and sisters, about 8 to 10 days ago I had gone to Kedarnath. The gates of the temple were about to be closed. I was fortunate that I had the opportunity to pay obeisance to Mahadev ji. Whenever I go to Kedarnath, a question arises in my mind continuously. How did Adi Shankaracharya ji reached this inaccessible place thousands of years ago?

Even in this period of modern technology, it is not so easy to go there. How would have Adi Shankara gone there thousands of years ago? Which is that eternal energy and power that motivated Shankaracharya to traverse through the entire country thrice and to establish the 4 Maths in the four corners of the country at the young age of 32? He made a great effort to culturally integrate India like a garland.

Adi Shankaracharya ji dedicated his life to strengthen our spiritual traditions. Adi Shankaracharya ji analysed very minutely all the wrongs that had crept in our traditions and at that age he had showed courage to criticize the evils within us. By putting forward right arguments, he made every effort to prevent the future generations from deviating to a wrong path. He had stressed the importance of the tradition of worshipping Shiva-Shakti-Vishnu-Ganapati and Kumar together. He re-established the Indian tradition once again. Adi Shankaracharya ji integrated the whole of India with the knowledge of the Vedas and Upanishads and connected it with the feeling of unity. He made the scriptures as the medium. He assimilated all the good things of different faiths and philosophies and motivated the people to follow the path of knowledge and devotion. He created Soundarya Lahari for the future generations. It turned out to be an institution with which every common man of the country could associate himself. In Soundarya Lahari it was ensured that no distinction between the different forms of God was made while propitiating the God.

"Ekam sadvipra bahudha vadanti"

The blessings obtained from Soundarya Lahari are also showered on everyone without any discrimination. It is believed that by chanting the text of Soundarya Lahari one can obtain knowledge, wealth, health and everything. The penance by Adi Shankaracharya is still present in the same form in the Indian culture - the culture which assimilates everything and unites everyone. This culture is also the basis for a new India; a culture that believes in the Mantra of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'(development of all).

Brothers and sisters, Shri Shankar Bharati Mahaswamiji has dedicated his life to spread the message of Adi Shankaracharya to the people. Considering the entire world as a family, Adi Shankaracharya's message of 'ekatma bhav' has been reaching to the people through Vedanta Bharati. They are associated with Vedas and Upanishads in different languages and with several publications and books. And they are continuing with this trend.

Friends, the more the people read about the spiritual glory and the ancient messages of India, the more the world will get benefited out of it. The mankind which is confused is passing through a crisis such as the fight over presenting oneself as superior than the others or the fight over the path to attain salvation. Adi Shankaracharya gave the principle of Advaita or Oneness, where there is no existence of Dvaita. There is no possibility of conflict

where there is no dualism. In different parts of the world whenever there is an obstruction in the path of life the countries set their eyes on India. In this way, all the problems of the world can be resolved by our traditions. We have inherited these traditions in our life.

ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु ।

सह वीर्यं कर्वावहे । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहे ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Let everyone be nurtured and let everyone be strengthened. We never say that let 'me' be nurtured or let 'me' be powerful. In the temples we pray that everyone should be nurtured and be strengthened. This is our tradition. No one should be jealous of the other.

Today on this occasion I want to mention a special event of Vedanta Bharati which is Vivekadipani and 'Vivek utkarshani contest'. Very few people would know that efforts were made to weaken this interaction with Adi Shankaracharya, our spiritual traditions and culture. Attempts were made to destroy it but no one could end this legacy for thousands of years. It is said--

दीन-ए-इलाही का बेबाक बेड़ा,

नक्शा जिसका अक्स-ए-आलम में पहुँचा।

किए पांच सौ पार सातों समुंद्र,

न अमन में ठिठका न कोई गुलजाम में झिझका।

वो डूबा दोहाब-ए में गंगा के अंदर।।

However, the long years of slavery had impacted our spiritual knowledge which today is largely confined to books. It is safe only with some priests. The kind of effort that should have been made after independence was not made. If today's young man is reading everything from his mobile phone then how will he get to know about the traditional knowledge hidden in the books? Who will let him know about this great heritage? So, telling the school students about our Indian culture and values through the programme Vivekadipani and through quiz competition is a great initiative by Swamiji. This is a great service even for the future generations.

The ultimate goal for any person in Indian philosophy is to attain liberation. The philosophies of the Vedas and Upanishads believe that 'vyakti' or individual, 'samasti' or society and 'srishti' or universe or creation and 'parmeshti' or 'God' all are interconnected. We do not see them in isolation but in an integrated whole. This philosophy recognises the planet as 'mother earth'. It says that Earth belongs to all and Earth is our mother. This philosophy gave birth to ' vasudhaiva-kutumbakam'.

Similarly, Soundarya Lahari also has a Mantra-"फलः अपिवाञ्छा समाधिकम्" which means the earth provides us more than what we demand. Such a great truth is reflected in this simple word. We all have enough water, air, river, grains, minerals, plantations, everything from the nature. It is essential to conserve this boon.

This very idea is our tradition. It emphasizes not to exploit the nature but to use the resources in a balanced manner from the nature. Exploitation of nature is considered as a crime here. Only 'Milking of nature' is the human right. Our tradition has taught us this. You have always seen this in our governance and administration.

Brothers and sisters, India is a country that has been persistently striving for justice, dignity, opportunity and prosperity not only for herself but also for the entire world. You must be aware that International Solar Alliance was launched last year. The government is constantly trying to promote solar energy both nationally and internationally. Even today, in the plans of the centre, you will get a glimpse of this desire of protecting the nature. The kind of work that is going on in the fields of solar power, wind power and hydropower was never seen before.

The world's largest renewable capacity expansion programme is going on in this country - the country of Soundarya Lahari.

The government is aiming at achieving 40% of its energy needs by non-fossil fuel based renewable energy by the year 2030. By the year 2022 when India will be celebrating 75 years of independence, the government aims to achieve 175 Gigawatts... I am not talking about Megawatt. Megawatt is a matter of past. Today we are talking about Gigawatts; Gigawatt - for the production of renewable energy. Due to the government's efforts more than 22000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity has been increased and integrated with the power grid in the past 3 years. The previous government could add only 12000 megawatts to the renewable energy capacity in the last 3 years of its tenure while it had spent Rs .4000 crores on the renewable energy in last 3 years of its tenure. After coming to power we have spent approximately 11000 crore rupees in this sector within 3 years.

At present our country has the electricity generation capacity of about 300 GW. It includes the electricity generation from all types of sources like coal, water, solar and wind energy. You will be surprised to know that if the resources available in the country are fully utilised, then 750 GW of electricity can be generated only by solar power. We should utilise our potential effectively.

Ceaseless efforts are being made by the government in this direction. For this, solar parks are being set up across the country; building bye laws have been changed in order to promote rooftop solar programme, loans are being provided at low interest rates for installing solar plants in government buildings; solar plants have been given infrastructure status and long term loans are being provided for these. Bengaluru is in a way the land of start-ups. The youngsters here are associated with innovation and inventions. I want to invite the youngsters of Bengaluru who are associated with start-ups. Come let us begin a movement for clean cooking. How can we make a cheap and affordable cooking stove by using solar energy? The old models of solar cookers are not suitable for the modern families. They want a gas-like oven. Even this is possible today. There's a huge market in this field for today's youngsters and start-ups. Clean cooking will prove to be a boon for old mothers. The forest dwellers will not have to deforest in order to get firewood for fuel. They can cook their food by using solar energy. This will also save time in cooking food for their children. We should strive towards those innovations that will benefit the country. You will see the level of impact on the society the day when all the institutions of the country will be able to fulfil their energy needs themselves.

Friends, I want to demonstrate the fact as to how a new approach is saving the country's money and also protecting the environment. Brothers and sisters, the LED bulb which earlier used to cost Rs. 350 now costs only Rs. 40-45 under the new UJALA scheme. Till date more than 27 crore LED bulbs have been distributed throughout the country by our government. In Karnataka as well approximately 1.75 crore bulbs have been distributed. Even if we consider savings of Rs. 250 per bulb then the country's middle class has saved approximately 7000 crore rupees. Moreover, these bulbs are saving electricity bill in every household. Whoever has LED bulbs in his home will surely see a reduction in his electricity bill. Therefore, the use of energy has also declined. The middle class families have saved approximately 14000 crore rupees in one year. Naturally, the use of LEDs has reduced the consumption of electricity. This means that 7000 MW less energy is required in the installed capacity. If a 7000MW plant was installed, then that would have cost of at least 35 to 40 thousand crore rupees. By saving electricity, we could save the country 35- 40 thousand crore rupees. This was achieved only by changing the approach of working through a plan. The money that was saved by the middle class by purchasing LED bulbs and by reduction in electricity consumption amounts to approximately 55 to 60 thousand crore rupees. The middle class families have benefited.

Because of the government's efforts, now the local bodies that are replacing the street lights with LED bulbs are also benefiting financially. I am the MP of Banaras and I helped Banaras save approximately 15 crore Rupees which is being utilised for other schemes. It is estimated that a Tier-II city is able to save approximately 10 to 15 crore Rupees.

These funds are now being spent in the development of the city. With the efforts of the government there is a possibility of saving the expenditure incurred on the import of petrol and diesel from abroad.

Brothers and sisters, petrol and diesel have no future. These natural resources will exhaust one day. The future belongs to solar energy, wind energy and of hydro energy. We can do it easily in our country because we are the people who believe in preserving nature and worshipping nature. Sacrificing our lives for protecting the trees has been inherent in our tradition. We pray even for breaking the branch of a tree. We have been taught to be kind and affectionate towards the living beings since our childhood. Every day after the Aarti we chant the shanti mantra-“वनस्पतयः शान्ति आपः शान्ति” (Vanaspatayaha shanti aapaha shanti)

But this is true that this tradition has been marred over the years. Today the Saints have to increase their efforts in this regard. Only if we are able to bring the texts, that have been our traditions, into practice we will be able to fight the challenge of climate change. Our entire Rig Veda is dedicated to this.

Brothers and sisters, I also want to give the example of Ujjwala Yojana. Through this scheme, the government has so far provided gas connections to more than 3 crore poor women. These women had to depend on either wood or kerosene when they did not have access to a gas connection. The government scheme has not only made their lives easier but also provided them with a safer environment.

Our country has gone through several changes over the years - changes in the individuals and changes in the society. Over the years, some evils also creep in the society. But a special feature of our society is that whenever such evils have crept in, someone or the other from within the society had taken the lead to eliminate it. Our great saints have spent their entire lives in enlightening us against the evils of the society. There was a time when the leadership was under our country's saints.

One of the unique features of our country is that from time to time we got great Saints like Adi Shankaracharya, Sant Vasaveshwar, who had identified these evils and showed us the path to salvation.

That time demands that we talk of the country along with the god of our religion; we should talk of Bharat Mata. In order to liberate Bharat Mata from the stranglehold of evils like illiteracy, ignorance, malnutrition, black money and corruption, the Saints and the spiritual society should also increase their efforts and show the path to

the country.

With everyone's participation and concerted efforts we can create a new India. Everyone can develop only with the help of everyone.

I once again congratulate all of you on the chanting of Soundarya Lahari and on the completion of 10 years of continuous spiritual practice. I also bow down to the spiritual leaders who are engaged in the penance for the past 10 years and I thank them for that penance.

I bow down to Sri Sri Shankar Bharati Mahaswami ji and end my speech here.

Once again I feel privileged to be present here on this auspicious occasion. It is a blessed moment for me. I wish to continue with some good work for Mother Bharati by seeking your blessings.

Thanks a lot!!

AKT/AK/IG/MG/AK

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