



English rendering of the text of PM's Speech at Ramanujacharya Stamp Release Event

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I am very happy to release a stamp on the occasion of the one thousandth birth anniversary of the great social reformer and Saint Shri Ramanujacharya. I am privileged to have been given this opportunity.

The central message of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya's life was inclusive society, religion and philosophy. Saint Shri Ramanujacharya believed that whatever is, and whatever will be, is but an expression of God. He saw the manifestation of God in Human beings, and Human beings in God. He saw all devotees of God as equal.

When caste distinction and hierarchy had been recognized as integral to society and religion and every one had accepted her place as high and low in the hierarchy, Saint Shri Ramanujacharya rebelled against it - In his personal life and religious teachings.

Saint Shri Ramanujacharya was neither limited to his lectures nor he remained a new path finder rather he lived up to his words too. Treading on the hymn- मनसा वाचा कर्मणा he made his life a sermon. The thought of his heart was in his words and the same was evident in his deeds also. One specific aspect of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya was that in order to stop things getting aggravated he always tried to settle the disputes and solve the controversies. For the understanding of God, the middle path of "विशिष्टाद्वैत" was a separate link between the अद्वैतवाद और द्वैतवाद .

Saint Shri Ramanujacharya was opposed to every such ritual that segmented the society and was divisive. He used his full energy in breaking and changing such system.

You all know, how he was asked not to make public that mantra of salvation and liberation and how in defiance he called an assembly where he pronounced that mantra before everyone, the persons belonging to every caste and level. He said, a mantra that is capable of ending the hardships should not be restricted to a single entity, rather every one should know it. Such vast and helping was the heart of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya.

This is precisely why Swami Vivekananda spoke of the heart of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya — the large heart that cried for the downtrodden at a time when being downtrodden was recognized and accepted as part of one's karma. Saint Shri Ramanujacharya broke the settled prejudice of his times. His thinking was much ahead of his era.

In more than one sense, Saint Shri Ramanujacharya was a millennial sage — who foresaw a thousand years before, the hidden and un-spelt-out aspirations of the downtrodden. He realized the need to include the socially excluded, outcaste and the divyangs to make not only religion, but society itself, wholesome and complete.

He emerged just like God for the poor and down trodden, exploited and deprived ones and dalits.

At one time the entire administration in the Shrirangam Temple in Tiruchirapalli was controlled by a specific caste. He included persons from different castes in the Temple administration. A number of responsibilities were given to women also. He made the temple a place of people welfare and public services. He converted the temple into such institution where poor people were given clothing's, food and shelter. His reformative models are still seen working as "रामानुज-कुट" in many temples.

You will find many such examples in his life. While challenging caste-system he made such a person his mentor to whom the society of then was considered not fit to become a teacher. He went to tribal communities and enabled them to become awakened and worked for the improvement of their social status.

Thus people from all religious sects and communities got inspirations from the presence and words of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya. The statue of Muslim princes Bibi Nachiyar in worshipping posture in front of God at the temple in Melkot is a glaring proof of it. Only a handful persons in our country know that it was only Saint Shri Ramanujacharya who got affixed the statue of Bibi Nachiyar, the daughter of Delhi Sultan 1000 years ago in that temple.

You just can imagine that what a magnificent message was given by Saint Shri Ramanujacharya for the social bonhomie and intermixing of society through this act. Even now tributes are paid at the statue of Bibi Nachiar. So like the statue of Bibi Nachiyar the message of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya is still relevant.

The life and message of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya has also strengthened and fortified the liberal and multi faceted tolerant aspect of Indian society. Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar on 03 June 1927 had written an editorial on him in his magazine "Bahishkrut Bharat". Reading of this 90 year old article instil our hearts with a stream of very composing waves.

Baba Saheb wrote: " It was indeed Saint Shri Ramanujacharya who had contributed and worked for bringing and implementing equality and parity in the Hindu Religion. He made Kanchipurna, a non-Brahmin as his Guru. He expressed his anguish when his wife tried to purify house after the Guru had taken his meal at their residence.

Saint Shri Ramanujacharya was highly embarrassed to see his own residence getting purified after the visit of a Dalit Guru. He also got angry over this as the malady he was trying his best to eradicate could not be done away from his own place. After this incident Saint took Sanyas and then devoted rest of his life for the cause of social welfare. I will say again, he not only preached instead lived up his teachings through action."

Baba Saheb has also narrated in his editorial that how Saint Shri Ramanujacharya used to empower the women in the mindset of society prevailing in those days.

He writes: “ Having discourse with a Dalit woman in Tiruvallee he (Saint Shri Ramanujacharya) said to the lady that you knows more than me. After it he initiated that woman and also established her statue in the temple. He made one untouchable person Dhanurdas his disciple. After taking a bath in the river daily he used to come back home with the help of this disciple.

This was a unique amalgamation of soberness and revolt. A person whose house is purified after the entry of a Dalit Guru and that person finds his escort in a dalit to go temple after bathing in river. A period when dalit women were prohibited for a free speech and in the same time, he after accepting defeat in a debate from a dalit women, also gets erected the statue of that women in temple.

That is why Babasaheb was highly impressed from Saint Shri Ramanujacharya. Persons reading Babasaheb will come across the massive impact of the life and thinking’s of Saint Ramanujacharya on Babasaheb.

I think there will be very few persons whose life had impressions on different time frames of one millennium. The inspiration and motivation of the teachings of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya gave birth to a number of social reforms and movements during these 1000 years. His simple message also framed the Bhakti Movement.

The Warkari cult in Maharashtra, Vallabh cult of Gujrat and Rajasthan, Chaitanya cult of Central India and Bengal and Shankar Deo in Assam spread his message to public at large.

Even the premier Gujarati poet Narsi Mehta got inspired from Saint Shri Ramanujacharya and said: वैष्णव जनतो तेने कहिए, जे पीर पराई जाणे रे !!! so to have a sense of experiencing the pain of a poor is just due to Saint Shri Ramanujacharya.

The sayings of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya has enabled the millions of people of this country to behold the social responsibility and tread for social cohesion and bonhomie. He has taught us that the very thought of religion as submersion in fanaticism and rituals is the way of cowards, ignorant and superstitious persons. Hence every that person who takes stand against caste system, disparity and violence in turn becomes Guru Nanak and Kabeer.

Its our culture to modify and renovate those old things which are obsolete and doesn’t qualify the time scale. So in our country there came such great souls who worked for social reforms and for that they put their personal prestige at stake, consumed poison and took risk. They worked for the eradication of centuries old systematic faults. Their quest was for social reforms, for saving the conscience of India and its awakening.

It is the penance and pious stream of eternal social awakening by sages like Saint Shri Ramanujacharya that for ever our reverence stood firm on our glorious past and our conduct, customs and rituals were transformed according to time. Our thinking remained beyond time limits which resulted in the progressive march of our society since ages. And that is the eternity by which our culture is still nascent despite being ancient. And only due to the nectar churning of these great souls we can proudly proclaim that: “कुछ बात है कि हस्ती मिटती नहीं हमारी, सदियों रहा है दुश्मन दौर-जमां हमारा”. The world map has witnesses sea changes, many big empires are non- existent but our Bharat, our Hindustan is still marching ahead with the mantra of सबका साथ-सबका विकास.

Today I am happy that on the millennia birth anniversary of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya many institutions are jointly conveying his teachings to each and every household. I hope these messages have been meticulously clubbed with the present status of our nation.

You all are aware that Saint Shri Ramanujacharya had also linked fulfilling the needs of the poor with social responsibility. For instance, he got an artificial lake made, spread over 200 acres in Thondanur near Melkot. This lake continues to exist as a living example of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya’s work for the welfare of the people. Even today it serves over 70 villages, fulfilling their drinking water and irrigation needs.

Today when everywhere is the concern for water then this lake made one thousand years ago is an answer to the necessity of water conservation. An uncounted number of generations have been blessed by this lake and they survived due to it. This lake is a proof of the fact that what ever we plan for water conservation for now turns beneficial to masses for centuries. Hence the cleaning of rivers and lakes, digging of lakhs of tanks is a part of the preparation for the present as well as the future.

While referring to this lake I will appeal to you all that while spreading the message of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya you must also energize and motivate the masses for water conservation now on.

I would also like to make an appeal to the leaders of the various institutions gathered here. As India enters its 75th year of Independence in 2022, we are working on the weaknesses and constraints that hold us back. You too, must set yourself specific targets which are tangible and measurable.

You can decide as whether to reach 10 thousand villages or to reach in 50 thousand dwellings.

I further appeal you all in addition to the national religion awakening words of Saint Shri Ramanujacharya more and more people be activated for human well being, women welfare and poor empowerment in addition to present challenges.

I conclude at this point and ones again express my gratitude for giving me an opportunity to release the commemorative postal stamp on Saint Shri Ramanujacharya.

Thank you all.

AKT/ST/Sangeeta/AK

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