

Lokarpan Vaktavya (Book Release Address)ⁱ

I am deeply beholden to Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan,(and their colleague organizers of this event), Justice Dr. M. Rama Jois and Sr. Advocate Shri K.G. Raghavan for giving me this unique opportunity of performing the *punya karma* of *Lokarpan* of *Human Rights Bharatiya Values* i.e. the sacred task of dedicating the book to the people-at-large for whose benefit it has been published.

Black in his 20th Century Dictionary defines Human Rights as the “freedoms, immunities and benefits that, according to modern values (especially at an international level), all human being should be able to claim as a matter of right in the society in which they live”. Black’s Dictionary enjoys a celebrity status in legal and judicial circles. However, as an Indian, a Bharatiya, I have not been able to reconcile myself with the use of the expression ‘according to *modern* values’. This I say for two reasons. First, the ‘Human Rights’ as defined in Indian Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 means the right relating to **life, liberty, equality** and **dignity** of the individual guaranteed by Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by the courts in India. This definition of human rights, as given in Indian legislation, is wider than the one in Black’s Dictionary. Secondly, and more importantly for me, I am a Bhartiya, and so, I believe in Bhartiya values, wherein Human Rights is *not* a modern concept. India, excepting for the period when it was ruled by non-Indians has always believed in and practiced human rights. Human rights

philosophy is deep rooted in Indian value tradition ever since ancient times.

Former Chief Justice of India, Shri M.N. Venkatachaliah has beautifully said in his Foreword graciously contributed to the Book of the Day, “there is then the noble Indian exhortation of ‘the whole world as one family’, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, which is unique to Indian ethos”. Justice Venkatachaliah goes on to remember India of the forgotten years, when it was accepted as the most hospitable country to which great human caravans from other parts of the world arrived, congregated and merged. India, the mother of several great religions of the world, should come to be painted as an ‘intolerant’ nation, is something which is painful to see. This is because of political opportunism, the denigration of great ideals of India and though the nation is big but sometimes men of the nation become too small.

It is such like state of affairs which invited an observation from Arnold Toynbee that ‘the prospects of survival of the human race were considerably better when we were defenseless against tigers than they are today, when we have become defenseless against ourselves (i.e.our own people)!’

The Indians who have imbibed into themselves the concept of *Dharma* believe in upholding human rights. We are a value based society. The concept of Dharma distilled by Justice M. Rama Jois from the *Karna Parva*ⁱⁱ of Mahabharata and propounded in his celebrated work **The Legal and Constitutional History of India** was quoted by Justice Dr. K. Ramaswamy, the then Judge of the Supreme

Court of India in one of his judgments ⁱⁱⁱ. The concept is – “The word ‘Dharma’ or ‘Hindu Dharma’ denotes upholding, supporting, nourishing that which upholds nourishes or supports the stability of the society maintaining social order and general well being and progress of mankind; whatever conduces to the fulfillment of these objects is Dharma; it is Hindu Dharma”.

The Supreme Court of India has ruled that Hinduism is a way of life. It would tantamount to belittling the concept of Hinduism if it were to be construed as ‘religion’ in its narrow and conservative sense. To share with this august gathering my own thought, which has developed after reading Dr. Rama Jois, that the expanse of the word *Dharma* as understood in Sanskrit is much more deeper than what is conveyed by the English word ‘religion’. It would not be an exaggeration to say that English language does not possibly have a word which can fully encompass within its fold the meaning of the word Dharma!

Bharatiya Rishis and Maharshis have pondered over for years, and even generations, to identify the ways and means which would help in developing an ideal society – a society which believes in civility and peaceful co-existence. A whole set of values has emerged which is called the Human Values, the Bhartiya Values. According to Jnanapitha Laureate Dr. Satyavrat Shastri, an important basis of value is their usefulness for the welfare of others. According to him there are five factors which constitute the basis of Indian Value System. They are: (i) faith in life, (ii) intellectual reflection, (iii) enlightenment of environment, (iv) welfare of others, and (v) individual sublimation or internal development. ^{iv} Interestingly, these five are also the

foundation stones on which the edifice of Human Rights is built.

Justice Dr. M. Rama Jois is an Institution by himself. It is difficult to believe the variety and range of subjects on which he writes and has written. Beginning from Legal and Constitutional History of India, he has to his credit a beautiful monograph written on several quotes from Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads which are inscribed on the gates and walls of our Parliament. I wish, if only our great Parliamentarians could read and practice even a few of them ! He has also written the book *Be Immortal* based on the preaching and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

To my mind, Justice Rama Jois is a visionary blessed with a deep insight and capacity to see which may possibly not be seen by others. I am reminded of a reference from Ramayan which I may befittingly quote. Goswami Tulsidasji in his great epic *Shri Ramcharitamanas* invokes the blessings of Guru and writes a couplet praising the dust of Guru's feet. He equates the dust of Guru's feet with *Anjan* or *Surma* i.e. Salve which, when applied to the eyes, has a magical effect. Such salve cleans the eyes and immensely enhances the visionary power. He writes -

Translated into English, the couplet means –

*This Salve once applied to mind's eye,
Gives insight, Thy holy epic to recite.
With such insight, mundane is transparent,
The unseen is seen thro' mines, mounts, mains.*

Justice Dr. Rama Jois is blessed with that divine insight which penetrates deep into the great ocean of knowledge, which the Indian classics, our own vedic, puranic and ancient literature are. The jewels of values, rich and everlasting, be they hidden in the ocean of knowledge, mountains of wisdom, mines of thoughts or mains of philosophy, all these unseen become transparent and seen by the insight of Justice Dr. Rama Jois, who certainly enjoys Divine blessings ! **Human Rights Bharatiya Values** is yet another example of his deep learning, powerful perception, and beauty of articulation. Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan deserves to be complimented for bringing out this beautiful publication which is undeniably of extreme relevance to the contemporaneous society.

The message of Bharatiya scriptures can be protected by only such living persons as Justice Rama Jois is, who have understood, imbibed and lived by the sacred message of the scriptures and not just kept to himself but made it available in simple and easy-to-understand version for the common man. According to Swami Nikilanand Saraswati of Chinmaya Mission, one who has experienced the veracity of the scriptures and given validity to them by redefining deserves to be designated as *Mahatma*. Our ancient scriptures, which are the prime source of Bharatiya values, feel enchanted by the learned when they develop discourse on them and explain their contents by propounding their relevance to the modern contexts in such a way that those who are eager to learn, and those who feel the urge, can gain the sacred knowledge hidden in scriptures and waiting to be rediscovered. Such books like those written by Justice Rama Jois, including the one which is in our hands today –

Human Rights Bharatiya Values, are in a way the renovated scriptures. Such books enable understanding of Bhartiya Values in the context of time and place. The central message of the scriptures would remain the same for all times to come ever since their origin, but to keep them rejuvenated, the significance of conveying the contents in modern terminology cannot be lost sight of. Human Rights Bharatiya Values would enable understanding of the significance of Bharatiya Values in relation to the Human Rights. This would have a dual impact. The book will serve the cause of Human Rights; and, at the same time, it will make the Bhartiya Values relevant and meaningful to the youth of the day.

We have to remember that Bharatiya Values will protect those who would protect the Bharatiya Values.

I am thankful to all of you for listening to me with patience. While standing up to speak before you I am reminded of a sight which is often seen by us. Those who perform obeisance at dawn and dusk, standing in waist deep waters in a river or a pond, pick water in the cup of palms, recite a sacred hymn or *incanto*, bow their head in reverence and then release the water in the river or pond wherefrom it was taken. So am I today. I have randomly picked up in the cup of my palms a few thoughts from the books written by Justice Rama Jois, murmured a few words and offered by releasing the thoughts to the same source wherefrom they have come. I bow my head unto Justice Rama Jois and to you all.

May Goddess Saraswati bless the pen of Justice Rama Jois with such flow of knowledge, learning and wisdom that in

the coming times he continues to present many more creations like **Human Right Bharatiya Values**.

Before I take your leave I have a request to make to Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. A little earlier I have told to you who according to Swami Nikhilanand is a Mahatma. My request is that if Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan brings out the next publication authored by Justice Dr. Rama Jois, the name of the author would be printed as ‘Mahatma Rama Jois’.

ⁱ Text of Book Release Address delivered by **Justice R.C. Lahoti**, Fr. Chief Justice of India. *Lokarpan* of **Human Rights Bharatiya Values** authored by **Justice Dr. M. Rama Jois**, on **04.05.2016** at the function. Function organized by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan / The Advocates’ Association / Bharat Vikas Parishad / Vijnaneshwara Pratishthana.

Venue: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Race Course Road, Bengaluru

ⁱⁱ Ch. 69, Verse-58

ⁱⁱⁱ **A.S. Narayana Dixitalu v. State of Andhra Pradesh**, (1996) 9 SCC 548, para 59

^{iv} **Human Values**, Vol. I published by Bhartiya Vidya Mandir, Kolkata.