

Why am I proud to be an Indian?

I am a citizen of the world because I am an Indian! A very, very proud Indian! The pride of being a majestic son of Bharath Maata is raging through my veins like a river of fire! I am proud to be an Indian because I am aware that it is a great privilege and an immense responsibility in one. I am proud to be an Indian because I know what I represent. I stand before you, with my heart full to the brim, of joy that is unspeakable and my eyes moist with a sense of gratitude that can never be expressed in words.

To start with, my pride was just raw, as in the case of most of us. Today, it is not so. It is a temple of understanding, an altar of conviction and a sanctum sanctorum of the light of love. How did this happen? I was brought into this world, into India to be precise, by my parents. But, I was really born in the palm of my beloved, my refuge, my Master, Satguru Sivananda Murtygaru. Yes, it was after I came to him that I was born! All that I did was sit before him, at his feet, sipping a cup of coffee and listening with ceaseless amazement to the cascade of wisdom that gushes out of him. He showed me what India is.

What have I realized as an Indian?

I am not an improved-ape. I am a descendant of Maharishis. My ancestors were not groping in darkness. As beings, they were humans. As for prowess, they were godly! Maharishi Viswamitra is one of my grandfathers. He ate and slept and lived like you and me. But, by simply raising his *Yoga danda*, he could create a set of parallel higher worlds, with all the constellations, asterisms and even the presiding deities! Maata Nalayini is one of my grandmothers. She could arrest the rising of the Sun because it meant the death of her husband. King Harischandra, who could walk out of his kingdom for the sake of a word, is one of my uncles. Kannagi of Madurai, who burnt a city to ashes because the king was unjust and the people mute witnesses, is one of my aunts. I have thousands of sisters and brothers, who not only had a perfect knowledge of the creation and a fair degree of mastery over it but also the humility to abide by the course of nature without being tempted to interfere with it. Every one of them understood the greatness of this country and their very life enriched that greatness. **I represent them.**

I did not learn things in the ascending order. My education was not from alphabet to the ultimate. I started with the ultimate and learnt the alphabets much later, for the joy of expressing the ultimate. Yes, when the first man was born on this most sacred soil in the world, the highest wisdom was already waiting at his service, 'like milk being ready in the bosom of the mother even before the child comes out of the womb.'

Therefore, the only natural tendency of the early Indian was to acquire that highest wisdom first, comprising realization of the Self, knowledge of the structure of the universe and the secrets of creation. It was after obtaining these that he looked at the world and understood its ways. **Yes, I am a helpless Indian who could not avoid knowing God first, before I proceeded to know the world.**

I am poorly qualified academically but well educated. I know that in a crisis, it is not my Doctorate which is going to help me but forbearance and patience. I have been taught, not at the college but by my Master that life is nothing but a series of circumstances, ever-changing without any let up. He made me see that life is nothing but relationships. Good or bad, happiness or sorrow, success or failure, loss or gain, why, birth or death, they are nothing more than changing circumstances. If happiness is fleeting, how can sorrow be permanent? It is by growing taller than the circumstances that you handle them adeptly. It is by maintaining optimum distance that relationships are maintained and you are protected. It is by remaining impersonal that you understand what exactly love is. If you are not neutral, love is no more than a boiling cauldron of emotions that derail you and drain others. Let me dine with the King and the next moment walk barefooted alone on the road. The difference is irrelevant to me! Let me enjoy robust health one day and writhe in pain in a hospital bed the next day; I will not complain. Let the world heap praises on me one evening and abuses the next morning; I will remain intact. I do not know what will happen the next moment, I have the facility to know it but I don't care to know it either. The vicissitudes of life cannot toss me hither and thither anymore. **For, I am an Indian, with my feet firm on the earth and my mind soaring unto the sky!**

My life is not an accident. I am born because I died sometime back. I am here to know that it is the past that becomes the future. Whatever happens is just, in accordance with a superior logic which is not hidden but not apparent either. I have no fate. I have only destiny. And, the power to rise above this destiny is very much within me. I also enjoy the choice to exercise it or not! To me, life is a great chance, to grab with all my hands! It has taught me how indebted I am to the society, how idiotic I have been in not realizing it earlier and how imperative it is on my part to repay the debt at least to some extent. To me, life is a golden opportunity to serve and sing the song of freedom, to spread the religion of love, to tower above anything that binds and yet, remain a simple, humble and sweet human being. To me, life is lively existence and not an imprisonment. To me, living means putting everything in its place, going through anything without fear or complaint, wishing everyone well, discharging my responsibilities dictated by destiny with a smile and leave

before I am asked to get out. Dignity lies in vacating before you are kicked out; retiring when you are on top! **Yes, I am an Indian who knows 'the art of living and the science of leaving.'**

I am a scientist essentially. I respect sentiments but I do not suffer from superstitions. I belong to a lineage of astronomers who, through their observations knew that the heavenly bodies hanging in space are not empty, meaningless objects but their placement, position and movement have not only a purpose in cosmos but a direct bearing on life on earth. I know time is still. I know time is consciousness. I can show you time is distance. My ancestors had perfected the art of observing the stars and planets, knew their patterns and distances and their impact on every aspect of our life. Life is ordained and obvious but living is our responsibility still. That is why, the ancient Indians were able to look into anything, cull out the truth that it contained and document it in the form of verses. Astronomy, mathematics, architecture, designing, ship building, medicine that included surgery, metallurgy, physics, chemistry; well you name anything, I can conclusively prove that the Indians' discoveries preceded the Westerners' findings by several centuries.

Just a few examples will illustrate the point better:

- Rig Veda clearly states that the earth rotates on its own axis and that it revolves around the Sun. The distance from earth to the moon and the Sun are mentioned in vivid detail. What our scriptures say as one day of Brahma tallies with the age of the earth, as proposed by modern scientists. Let us remember that the Vedic period is 6000 B.C.
- The Sulabh Sutras contain theorems, algebra, trigonometry and application of mathematics. They are older than any other treatise on higher mathematics anywhere in the world by several centuries
- Indian medicine or Ayurvedha was very advanced. The Susruta Samhita of the 6th century B.C. speaks of 12 types of fractures, gives an exclusive account of shoulder joint dislocation and it also tells us how to set them and how much time it would take to heal, from the infants to the middle aged persons.
- It also provides pictorial details of several surgical instruments, needles, the various kinds of materials that would be used for sutures, cotton headed probes and instruments for removal of tumour, cleaning the urinary tract etc.
- Again, it gives a detailed set of instructions to the students of medicine on performing autopsy
- The ancient texts speak of what is now known as plastic surgery, which was performed even three centuries ago, which fact has been recorded by a British commander

- The Caraka Samhita of the 1st century B.C. tells us that the human skin has seven layers, their thickness, what affects which and so on in detail. It also relates rashes to parasites from excretions internal and external
- We see a mention about the poppy pill that cardiologists speak of now. The causes of cardiac arrest like high cholesterol and blood pressure are listed in a sequence. The Sanskrit term for the heart is 'Hridayam.' The definition for Hridayam is *harati* = receives, *dadati* = propels and *yati* =circulates!
- Apianus' Pascal Triangle of 1527 A.D. is preceded by Pingala's Chandas-sutra 200 B.C.
- Pythagoras Bodhayanah 800 B.C.
- Day: 23:56:4.091 23:56:4.1 Aryabhata 5 c A.D.
- Velocity of Light 1,86,300 miles/ Muchealson & Morley, 1887 Sayana 1,86282.397 m/sec 14 C A.D.
- Speed of Light Olaus Roemer 1676 A.D. R.V. 01:50:04 6000 B.C
- Elliptical path Johannes Kepler 1609 A.D. R.V.:01:164:02 6000 B.C.

Well, it is impossible to list out the achievements of my ancestors here. They are thoroughly documented, their data and dates are very precise and the only theme that has been governing their search and findings is welfare of the society. **An Indian is not a social animal but a well-wisher of all.**

I am an artist, ruled by aesthetics and litterateur. Music, dance, painting, sculpture, drama - well, in every form of art, we have reached a zenith. Aesthetics of a very high degree governed every form of art. What is so great about Indian art? It is a wonderful facility to express a riot of emotions, even conflicting sentiments in the most refined manner. It recognized that the human emotion should be directed towards divinity. Thus, in Indian art, the expression is transparent but the experience subtle. It neither dismisses emotion nor justifies its turbulence. It simply puts it in place, by lending it the most appropriate direction. That is why, we see movement in sculpture, stillness in music, picture in poetry, drama in space and everything in dance. That is why you see that almost every villager in India is a natural singer; there is a tilt in the

way the village belle walks; there is a play of colour and place for music in every aspect of Indian life. **As an Indian, my colour is music and my goal, silence!**

Since I know the One, I am not confused by many. The light of the Sun emanates from the sky above. Its brilliant rays fall upon sea and the hill, the king and the spider, the flower and the gutter but it is not called or seen differently. Life is one, objects are many. I do not worship a piece of stone. My chants are addressed to an all pervading, omniscient reality and not a limited personality. I know I am addressing the Absolute Truth. I am aware I am no different from It. I employ the sound and light and technology to activate It in me and make It dynamic. The unlettered Indian, who is mercifully free from the sophistication of education, can tell you this. Tilling the soil under a scorching Sun, drenched in a flood of sweat, he pauses the moment he hears the sound of the bell from a distant temple, turns towards the direction of the temple tower, offers his obeisance and resumes tilling. He touches with reverence the plough that he made with his hands and he carries on his shoulders. His forehead touches the soil on which he walks. He does not worship the tower or the plough or the soil but the very divinity that is present in all. To him, it is perceptible as he is a beautiful part of that divinity! Today, this realization is mine, thanks to him, and I am spared the agony of intellectual gymnastics! Seeing One in many is the essential ingredient of the Indian gene. **As an Indian, I see that life is full of variety and not a bundle of conflicts.**

I am not alone. I am immensely aware that I am a part of a very large family, the cosmic family consisting of at least 14 planes of defined existence. Earth is my home that I share not only with my fellow human beings but with the minerals, the plants and the animals and always with the Divine. All of us and everything are inter-dependent on one another. This grand realization has been granted to me by my ancestors. It is this that activates a great sense of responsibility. For, on the one hand, this realization helps me break free from the shackles of limitations; on the other hand, it makes me see that my living has a bearing on life as a whole. My conduct is one small but necessary cog in the great wheel of life. My welfare and the world's well being are certainly connected.

More than everything, it is wonderful to realize that God is closer to me than my own skin! In that sense, not for a moment I am alone. Never do I feel lonely. In solitude, His company is intense; in company, His presence is immense! In the ultimate sense, He is 'absolute truth, adynamic and has no attitude.' In the intimate sense, He is lively, responsive and full of love. It is by realizing Him in me that I can see

Him anywhere else. Once this realization is attained, one can see Him everywhere, in everything and continue to live as a normal human being! He alone is! **The Indian sees God in everything, be it an object or a circumstance or anything.**

I am insignificant but important. When I look at the creation in which even this earth is nothing more than a spec of dust, what am I? But then, when I look within, with the help of Yoga peep into the pinhole in my heart and see the entire creation in me, do I not rub shoulders with God Himself? Again, when I understand that it is so with every being and this is possible for everyone, I am humbled. My life continues without any resistance thereafter, like a leaf in breeze. This spontaneous feeling of oneness with everyone and everything, this irreversible freedom is the gift of India to every living being in this cosmos. **Yes, it is as an Indian, I know that I am seemingly bound but essentially free and all of us are here to establish ourselves in this ultimate freedom here and now.**

You may ask me, 'Well! You have been waxing eloquent about a past. Glorious though it may be, what is the use of harping upon it? What about the present?'

I will answer the second part of your question first:

India's achievements in the modern era are significant. Though quiet and silent, its progress has been noticed by the world at large. Indians have earned very good name for themselves and their country in many fields abroad. Today, 38% of the Doctors, 12% of Scientists, 36% of NASA Scientists in USA, 34% of Microsoft employees, 28% of IBM employees, 17% of INTEL Scientists and 13% of Xerox employees are Indians!

Even a cursory glance at India's achievements leaves us stunned. For instance, India holds the

- 5th position in manufacturing commercial vehicles
- 4th largest Economy and in Pharmaceutical Industry
- 3rd largest standing army (1.5M) ; Investor base ; publication of books (70,000 titles every year out of which 20000 are in English!)
- 2nd largest pool of Scientists and Engineers in the world ; manufacturing Tractors ; production of Cement ; number of companies listed in BSE (6000)
- 1st : largest democracy; English speaking nation ; manufacturer of motorbikes (Hero Honda 1.7 m per annum) ; bandwidth capacity (over 8.5 Terabits per second) ; processor and exporter of diamonds

(9 out of 10 diamonds produced in the world go through India) ; producer and consumer of tea ; first woman pilot and crew ; oldest city in the world Kasi (27,000 years of recorded history)

This is only a very short snapshot. There are several achievements to the credit of modern India.

However, we cannot afford to overlook the other side of this list:

- **Poverty:** There was poverty even in the past but there was no starvation. You may be surprised to know that till the 17th century, India was the richest country in the world. In today's estimate, what the British looted from India would amount to \$ 1 T!!! Today's poverty is contrived, artificial and maintained by the guileful politicians for fulfilling their evil designs
- **Population:** Even in the past, India's population was on the high side, when compared with other countries. Today, it is the result of many dangerous reasons. Anyway, the attitude that number is strength has been systematically removed from the minds of the masses
- **Casteism:** The system of caste died long ago. Its place has been taken by a new and more powerful evil called casteism. The class division is also sharper than before. Here again, you can see the hand of wily politicians.
- **Corruption:** As a nation, we have become corrupt. We are only cheating ourselves if we deny this. From the pan shop in the street corner to a posh spiritual school, corruption is rampant and has been accepted as a way of life. All our achievements will be futile and fragile if this evil is not checked. One hole is more than sufficient to sink a boat.
- **Citizenship:** Today's Indian does not react even when his house is on fire. He does not move unless his very skin burns! The chase for money, of proportions we have never heard of before is the result of aping the West madly instead of picking and adopting from the West, aspects that are suitable for us. The spirit of nationalism disappeared with the programme of freedom struggle. These two factors have together diluted one of our greatest values called citizenship. We do not come together at all. We do not think collectively or act as a group or face the consequences as one family.

Keeping this in view, we must look at our current achievements and compare them with our achievements of the past. Then, we will understand certain very important facts:

- **Our achievements of the past were spiritual, scientific and artistic**
- **Our modern achievements are technological and materialistic**

What does it mean?

In the past, material life was given its due place and not considered as the goal of life. The improvement or the development of the quality of man was given paramount importance. Citizenship was insisted upon, as everyone's duty. In short, the goal was clear and everyone worked towards that.

Today's achievements have increased the physical comforts of man but weakened his inner quality. Old age homes where parents are left in the lurch because the husband and wife are otherwise busy ; spread of AIDS and promoting condoms as a solution instead of character ; hospitals functioning like seven star hotels leaving you breathless much before you are dead ; shameless lack of knowledge about our own culture and no sense of belonging to the motherland - - these facts of modern India's society show that we have paid too high a price for the so called progress.

This is where an organization like Rotary assumes a great importance. You are a collective force. You have access to information, be it ancient, modern or current. You have the machinery to take it across the seas, to all parts of the world. **The most significant feature of Indian values is their universality. The Vedas are resounding with their concern not only for the humanity at large, but the entire cosmic family. India contains solutions to the problems that constrict the soul of humanity today.**

Therefore, you have to take it up, for the sake of India and for the good of the world. Let me propose a three pointed formula based on the opening remarks of Satguru Sivananda Murtygaru:

1. Educate yourselves
2. Awaken Indians
3. Enlighten the world

How do we educate ourselves?

- Remember that institutionalised charity is not an Indian concept. The idea is to do things which will raise the level of people rather than dishing out doles

- Alleviation of poverty cannot be achieved through projects. It is by kindling the spark of citizenship and widespread awareness, particularly among the suffering that it can be tackled. Swami Chinmayananda, while addressing the Rotary International in Mumbai a few years ago said, **“Only when the population becomes the people, a country becomes a nation.”**
- Culture is the core character of India. We have been witnessing the failure of political, religious and social movements. **A global, cultural movement, with the all round development of man as the goal must be launched. You cannot think of a better place than India for being the origin of this grand movement. And Rotary, a movement which is global from its very birth will be the appropriate wheel to set this in motion**

When we educate ourselves thus, we are awakened. Then, we can awaken our countrymen. If we stand inspired, we shall inspire others. It is by understanding the greatness of Indianness and practising it that we can awaken the spirit of *Bharateeyata* in our countrymen. We must have pride in our heritage. We must feel fortunate to be the children of *Bharata Maata*. This pride should arise from a clear understanding of our culture and heritage. From the icy slopes of the Himalayas to the tapering tip of Kanyakumari, from the jungles inhabited by tribals to the big cities, from the mansions to humble abodes, it is one culture, one family that is expressing itself through many. This underlying unity that sustains the surface diversity is the beauty of India. Today, we stand bereft of this knowledge, as we have allowed ourselves to be swept away by the utterly materialistic designs of the West. We have all the facilities but we have become weak. We have tons of money but we do not have peace. We come from a very highly sophisticated lineage but we have no knowledge of it. Without this knowledge, we cannot call ourselves educated. So, Rotary in India can awaken Indians to Indianness.

It is then that you can take this message to the world. Why? **Indianness is not only relevant to India; it is vital for the good of entire humanity. Whatever we lose now will be lost forever.** I can assuredly tell you that your message shall be heard. For, you will not be preaching religion but propagating love. You will be telling the world that India is home for everyone in the truest sense of the term. You can explain to them that in the last ten millennia, India never trespassed anyone’s territory or faith. You can make them see that from the 10th century till modern times, those who attacked her, looted her and killed her children in thousands were absorbed by her like their own mother. You can tell them that India cannot hate for its very breath is love. You can gently caution them that India’s patience and forbearance need not

be mistaken for indifference or incapability. You can show them how this gigantic mother, this only beacon of hope to entire humanity is slowly waking up and is on the rise. You welcome all of them with your outstretched hands, a transparent heart and a loving smile to India and look at her through Indian eyes.

This much you do! India will do the rest.

The space that pervades, sustains and dwells in everything does not suffer from a single dent though every moment, there are stars born and die in it; every moment a million thunderstorms try to tear it to pieces with a relentless vehemence; they do not remember how dependent they are on space for their survival! The vast, compassionate space does not react but lends itself more and more; it has no fears of losing anything. This is what India is! The big stars may not know the value of space but the little bird knows that it is able to flap its wings and flutter about, thanks to the mercy of the ever expanding space. Its little song, which is a direct outpouring from its heart, is a message of joy, love and gratitude.

In short, what my Master is to me, that is what India is to all of us; that is what Bharath is to the entire world. It is the Guru in the great cosmic family. Tell me, why will I not be proud to be an Indian?

Vande Maataram!