

## **Panchaamrita – The real concoction for a Nation Building**

*'Agne naya supatha raye asman  
Visvani deva vayunani vidvan,  
Yuyo-dhyas-majjuhu-rana-meno  
Bhuyistham te nama uktim vidhema'*

*(O Lord of Fire, lead us on the right path, so that we attain physical and spiritual happiness by the virtue of our good deeds. O Lord, please keep us away from deviousness and evil).*

At the outset, I would like to extend hearty greetings to all on the occasion of Vijaya Dashmi and the 93<sup>rd</sup> Foundation Day of Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh. Not only does this festival of Vijaya Dashmi signify the victory of Rama over Ravana but it also celebrates the triumph of humility over ego; morality over immorality and compassion over cruelty. This day actually celebrates renunciation of throne by exile ridden Rama and the victory of the most down-trodden, marginalized, and excluded people residing in villages, forests, and foothills under the reigns of their revered deity.

Today by inviting me over on the occasion of your Foundation Day, not only have you extended respect and compassion to millions of exploited and deprived children of India but also to those of the entire world. On behalf of those millions of children, I extend heartfelt gratitude to you.

Almost thirty nine years ago an exasperated and hapless father Wasal Khan had knocked my door. His fifteen year old daughter Saabo who was born in slavery at a brick kiln in Sarhind, Punjab was about to be sold at a brothel. Those days I used to publish a fortnightly magazine in Delhi. Wasal wanted me to carry his story, so that his daughter could be saved. While listening to Wasal Khan's ordeal, suddenly a thought flashed past my mind. Had Saabo been my younger sister or daughter, could I have afforded to wait for even a single minute? I was aware that our Constitution does not permit slavery. I gathered a few friends, sold my wife's jewelry, hired a truck and drove it all the way from Delhi to Sarhind for rescuing the slaves. My friends and I were mercilessly beaten up by the brick kiln owner and his goons. Empty handed we returned to Delhi. I knocked at the court's door and was able to rescue all the 36 bonded labourers including Saabo.

While we were on our way back from the court, I could see that spark of happiness and jubilation on the faces of the mothers of the children who had given up all hope. In the tears of joy flowing down their cheeks, I could see the reflection of God. The children were having their very first tryst with freedom.

At that moment I thought, who am I to liberate anybody? Probably it was a way by which God was emancipating me somewhere deep within. The evil of child labour and slavery was rampant across the world, but there was absolutely no action or intervention against it. It is only the inherent spiritual power of my motherland that inspired an ordinary person like me to run a worldwide movement to save childhoods from being ruined.

Over the last twenty years the number of child labourers globally has fallen from 260 million to around 150 million. I feel heart-wrenched that even the day and age we live in; our daughters are still sold and brought at price much less than what cattle commands.

I have rescued several daughters from abject slavery and exploitation who do not even muster the courage of hugging and weeping on the shoulders of their parents because they feel that rape and sexual abuse has rendered their bodies and souls impure. My dear brothers and sisters, eight children who go missing every hour in our country, four children who are sexually abused and two who are raped are certainly someone's children if not that of our mother land '*Bharat Mata*'? We take immense pride in the fact that we are the children of *Gautam, Kapil, Kanaad, Anusuiya, Savitri, Seeta, Lakshmi Bai, Buddha, Mahaveer, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Maharana Prataap, Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Subhash, and Ashfaqulla Khan*. I ask you, I ask the sons and daughters of our great motherland, how long will all of you continue to be in the slumber of apathy, passivity and fear?

People often ask me how tender childhoods can be saved in India amidst so many drawbacks and problems. **My reply invariably remains, that India may be a land of hundred problems but it is also the mother of over a billion solutions.**

As a child, I used to participate in several religious ceremonies along with my family. After listening to the stories of *Lord Satya Narayana* and *Ram Charit Manas* we used to prepare '*Panchaamrit*' or the divine nectar and offered it to the deities before distributing to all present. With utmost humility and reverence for my motherland '*Bharat Mata*', I am offering a *Panchaamrit – the five element concoction* in her feet. In this *Panchaamrit*, I clearly see the potential of building a *Samvedansheel Bharat (Compassionate India), Samaaveshi Bharat (Inclusive India), Surakshit Bharat (Safe and Secure India), Swavalambi Bharat (Self-reliant India) and Swaabhimaani Bharat (Self-respecting India)!*

No respectable society can be built without compassion. Compassionless politics, economy and society are much like a body without the soul. Without genuinely feeling the pain of others and a firm determination to work towards ending that suffering happiness and peace cannot be instilled.

In the contemporary times robots, artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality are growing at a very rapid pace. There is no denying that they are useful too, but we should be equally mindful of the fact as to where would this fast paced technology lead us in 20-30 years from now? For all you know the role of teachers, doctors, philosophers, guides and motivators shall be significantly slighted. Along with schools, hospitals and markets our interpersonal relationships might just also shrink considerably. In such a situation, in the absence of familial values, human feelings and compassion where would we all head to? In my opinion countries with capitalist economies that are driven by physical luxuries would need India the most at that point in time. Therefore we must forthwith start inculcating sensitivity within ourselves. I have always said that the West has taught us globalization of markets, economy, consumerism, manufacturing and technology. This tornado and hot gust of materialism has swept most of us off our feet. To counter this we must ensure that cool and gentle breeze of compassion emanates from our great motherland.

**The second element of Panchaamrit is inclusivity.** India is a land of diversities. Our myriad religions, ways of worshipping, food, cultures, languages, costumes, and ways of thinking are beautifully nestled as colorful flowers in a vase. This is where our true beauty lies. There is no other country as diverse as India. Inclusivity is our soul. Without inclusivity unity in diversity cannot be imagined.

Rigveda says,

*'Samgacchadhwaṃ samvadadhwaṃ  
Saṃ vo manāṃsi jānatām  
Devā bhāgaṃ yathā pūrve  
Sañjānānā upāsate'*

(Let us pledge that we all shall walk together. No one will split; no one will be left behind. We will all speak in chorus. We will all think together. Like our ancestors we will also sit together and create the wealth of knowledge).

Development indicators for economists may vary from per capita income to GDP, but for me this scale is very different. I measure the development of society by a smile that we can bring on the face of an *Aadivaasi daughter enslaved at a farm in a far flung village or in a stone quarry reeling under constant threat, fear, insecurity and uncertainty.*

**The third element is security.** Without security and an environment of mutual trust and respect in the society, nation building is unimaginable. Internal security is equally if not more important than safeguarding our sovereign frontiers. There is a very popular hymn in the vedas.

*'Saha Naav-Avatu  
Saha Nau Bhunaktu  
Saha Viiryam Karavaavahai'*

(O Lord, May we all be protected! May we all be nurtured and make collective efforts).

The painful words of a 15 year old girl morbidly filled my ears with hot molten glass. I still remember how excruciating it was for me to hear all what she said that day. She was crying inconsolably while returning from the police station. She revealed that the night before she had cried and begged in front of her father to have mercy on her as she was extremely tired and jaded, but he did not stop and turning a deaf ear towards her plea he raped her. "I was left with no option other than lodging a complaint against my father" she lamented. She repeatedly kept saying remorsefully that "I should not have filed a complaint against my father."

This was not just a rape perpetrated on the daughter by a father. It was the rape of India's soul. It was the rape of our great traditions. It was the rape of our age old familial values. We hail from the land where Durga is worshipped as the goddess of power and courage, Saraswati is revered as the goddess of knowledge, Lakshmi is worshipped as the goddess of wealth. How can we accept and tolerate such fall and decimation of character?

Some months ago a 12 year old boy along with his friends upon finding his sister all alone gang raped her. These boys had watched porn film the night before this incident. The business of online pornographic films is flourishing unabated across the world. I have been incessantly demanding for a strong legislation against this crime. In fact last month during the United Nations General Assembly I met with several Heads of Countries and have already started working on an international treaty against online child pornography.

Our women grapple with fear, threat and insecurity at home, workplace, localities and public places. Those who are entrusted with the responsibility of running shelter homes for girls are raping and murdering them. So called custodians of child welfare and protection are selling children. Girls stop attending school fearing harassment and eve teasing and we out of fear remain quiet seeing all of this happening right in front of our eyes. This is a grave disrespect towards Bharat Mata. Fear makes us hollow from within besides fanning intolerance and violence. Silence of the society succumbing in front of crime and injustice is not merely cowardice but quite violent in itself! Last year in an endeavor for Safe Childhood, Safe India we had marched 12000 km under the Bharat Yatra. This historic march across the country commenced from Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanya Kumari and was joined by 1.2 million people. Our efforts still continue. A seer had once cautioned, ***'Abhayam mitrad-abhayam-amitrad abhyam-jnatad abhayam parokshat'***. (Let us not be afraid of friends, let us not be afraid of foes, let us not be afraid of the visible and let us not be afraid of the invisible).

**The fourth element of Panchaamrit is Self-reliant India.** True that all countries, businesses, markets and technologies are conjoined, but in order to become a self-reliant nation economic stability, job creation and social equity are a must have. Our country predominantly depends on agriculture and small and medium scale industries. We cannot become self-reliant by foreign investment or with the rich getting richer. We will have to empower our farmers, workers, and retailers. India is yet to get rid of starvation. Millions of children remain malnourished. Meaningful, quality and employment oriented skill building and education continues to be a challenge staring in our face. If we really want to reclaim the title of Golden Bird for our country, we will have to ensure that 85 million children who remain outside the ambit of education in our country are provided with quality, meaningful and equitable education.

The first hymn of Rigveda is ***'Agnim-lille Purohitam Yajnyasya Devam-Rtvijam; Hotaaram Ratna-Dhaatamam'*** (O well-wishers of society, lets light up the fire of knowledge. Collectively let us contribute towards the wellbeing of each other according to the need of the hour. Let us transform the shared knowledge into prosperity for all).

**The fifth element of nation building is "Self-respect".** Though hundreds of years of oppressive colonial rule could not kill the soul of India, but it certainly left scars of inferiority in the mind and a deep sense of mental slavery that we have still not been able to tide over. This inferiority complex conspicuously reflects in the ever increasing sense of contempt towards our language, tradition, culture, costume, way of living, food and education. It's a travesty that all efforts to eliminate this complex only make us even more irrational further inflating egos.

For generating self-respect towards our culture we will have to adopt the values that are at the heart of our great culture. In my opinion the great and eternal Indian culture has three philosophical elements. First, immortality which means neither we are born nor do we perish. Second, universality which means that we do not limit ourselves within the boundaries of time and space! It is for this universality that thousands of years ago our sages and saints could give out universal messages like '**Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam**' (Entire earth is one family). Third, totality which means we do not look at the society and this world in fragmentation. Upanishads say '**Isha vasyam idam sarvam, yatkimcha jagatyam jagat**'. (This whole circle of nature is fully pervaded by God whatever is in the universe is under existence and control of almighty God).

It is for this very reason our culture is not a pond of stagnant water; instead it is a perennial river which keeps giving birth to springs and tributaries. We Indians are born with a unique quality of continual self-improvisation and we must take immense pride in it.

I invoke the youth of India. Instead of copying and chasing the shadow of others recognize your innate cultural strength and derive self-respect from it. Let us all take a pledge for building a Compassionate, Inclusive, Secure, Self Reliant and Self-respecting India. If we start with millions of most marginalized and socially excluded children and work towards ensuring their freedom, protection, security, education, values and health only then will we be able to realize our goal of building a great India. A strong nation cannot be built by hurling blames and accusations on governments nor can it be made merely by making solicitations every now and then. So what makes a nation great? A nation becomes great only when its society chases a big dream and becomes resolute towards its pledge by making the most of its inherent power, energy and capabilities for achieving its goal. Tomorrow evening like every year, my children at Bal Ashram our long term rehabilitation center situated on the outskirts of Jaipur will enact *Raamleela* before consigning the effigy of the demon Ravana to flames. In a competition the children will unanimously identify ten social evils and crimes that are stymying our country. These evils will be written one each on every head of Ravana before being set afire. My children along with hundreds of villagers will take a pledge to collectively eliminate these evils and crimes from the society.

In doing this and achieving the goal of building a great and child friendly nation the participation and leadership of conscientious youth is absolutely essential. I request the youth from Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh to take a lead on this path for saving the present and future of our motherland. If the branches (*shakhas*) of the Sangh situated in almost all villages across the length and breadth of our country serve as a firewall to protect this generation of children, then all the generations to come will become self-sufficient in protecting themselves.

Sitting haplessly on the sea shore when *Hanumana* – the mighty Monkey Deity had forgotten his identity and sense of power, it was *Jamvanta* – The King of Bears who had reminded him '*Pavantanay bal pavan samaana, kaa chup saadh rahaa balwaanaa*' (You are the son of the God of Wind! Why have you fallen silent, you all powerful!). It is for this challenge that we have been celebrating the festival of *Vijaya Dashmi* ever after.

Like Jamvanta, I am also reminding you of your abundant inherent power. I am reminding you of the invocation of our sages and saints from the era of vedas dating back to thousands of years. **'Vayam rashtre jagryama purohitah'** (O well-wishers of this society wake up and rise and awaken the nation).

Om Shanti!

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*This is the gist of the speech delivered by Nobel Peace Laureate 2014 Mr. Kailash Satyarthi on the Foundation Day of Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh in 2018*