

Inaugural address by Shri O. P. Kohli, Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat at the seminar on 'Inter-faith-Harmony for a Global Civilization' organized by Shri Ramkrishna Ashrama, Rajkot at Rajkot. (24th June, 2018)

- Swami Vivekananda was a great exponent of Hinduism and its Vedanta doctrine. Vedanta stands for the philosophy of eternal truth and laws of the spiritual world which are universal. The most salient characteristic of Hinduism is the spirit of religious tolerance. At the beginning of the 19th century, when the western culture posed a great challenge to Hinduism, Swami Vivekananda aroused the sleeping consciousness of millions of his countrymen and created in them pride for their cultural heritage. He spread the Vedanta philosophy and spirituality in the western world in an organized way. He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-respect and pride which it richly deserved. His contribution to the rejuvenation of a new India was recognized across the world.
- Swami Vivekananda was a key figure who introduced the Indian philosophy of वेदान्त and Yoga to the western world. He raised inter-faith awareness and brought Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the 19th century. His message of universal brotherhood and self-awakening remains very

relevant in the present backdrop of widespread political turmoil all around.

- In the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, the representatives of all organized religions of the world – Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, etc. had assembled to spread the message of their religions. It was Swami Vivekananda who touched the deepest chord of everyone's heart by speaking about the validity of all religions and the harmony between them. He declared pride in belonging to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. When other participants talked of their religions, Swami Vivekananda spoke about eternal and universal dharma (सनातन धर्म).
- Religion has been a great civilizing force in the human history. Unfortunately, it has also been instrumental in generating lot of conflict and strife in the world. The great religions of the world have a moral responsibility to work for peaceful co-existence as they have a great influence on the millions of human beings living on this planet. To shed the baggage of religious fanaticism, fundamentalism and bigotry and to create an environment of peaceful co-existence is the need of the hour. The seminar envisages to spread the message of interfaith harmony and I invoke

upon the blessed soul of Swami Vivekananda to guide us towards achieving the lofty goal of the seminar to live peacefully upon this planet with a sense of peaceful co-existence and harmony.

- Ours is a modern world of the 21st century. We have seen the emergence of a global society where development of science and technology demands a new holistic paradigm which emphasizes upon convergence in place of conflict, complementarity in place of competition, compassion in place of cruelty and a globally acceptable ethics which will allow us to live in harmony.
- Swami Vivekananda, the great visionary and a great representative of Hinduism, delivered his historic speech at the Parliament of World's Religions held at Chicago on 17th September 1893. The Parliament of World's Religions is going to be held at Toronto from 1st November 2018 to 7th November 2018 on the 125th anniversary of this. I compliment Swami Nikhileshwaranandji, अध्यक्ष of Shri Ramkrishna Asrama, Rajkot, for organizing a wonderful seminar on "Inter-faith Harmony for a Global Civilization" – a Pre-Parliament Event as a prelude to the Parliament of the World's Religions scheduled to be held at Toronto from 1st November 2018 to 7th November 2018. By holding this seminar Swamiji has opened a new avenue for the preachers of various faiths where they can

interact with each other and can contribute constructively towards the divine cause of serving the humanity.

- I am happy to be part of this great event which aims at encouraging universal brotherhood and peaceful co-existence which is a prerequisite for our nation's development.
- I extend my warm and respectful regard to all the revered religious leaders and all the distinguished participants who have come here to share their respective view points on "Inter-Faith Harmony".
- May the divine soul of Swami Vivekananda continue to inspire the whole world to become more and more open, accommodative, tolerant and respectful toward each other's view points and enable us to live in perfect harmony so that our future generations can live a blissful life.
- With these few opening remarks, I declare this seminar on "Inter-faith Harmony for a Global Civilization" open. I also express my thanks to the organizers who gave me an opportunity to meet the distinguished participants and share my views on the theme of the seminar.

Jai Hind