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## Report

### *Vivekananda International Foundation inaugurated in New Delhi*

### **The Foundation should try to live up to Vivekananda's vision of resurgent India-Her Holiness Mata Amritanandamayi Devi**

By Pramod Kumar

"Today we need to pay special attention to the starving and illiterate people from the lower strata of the society. For this we need to go into society and act. Swami Vivekananda also stressed the importance of educating women and giving them their proper place in society," said Mata Amritanandamayi Devi. She was inaugurating the Vivekananda International Foundation in New Delhi on November 30.

Former Chief Justice of Supreme Court Shri MN Venkatachaliah, president of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari Shri P Parame-swaran, retired IPS and director of the Vivekananda International Foundation Shri Ajit Doval and noted singer Vani Jairam also shared the dais. About 500 distinguished people of Delhi including foreign diplomats, scholars, intellectuals, writers and civil servants were also present on the occasion. The function began with a prayer by noted singer Vani Jairam.

Vivekananda International Foundation is a project of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, which was formed in 1972 and today has over 240 branches spread over farthest and inaccessible areas of the country. It is silently engaged in the task of man-making for nation building.

Amma, as Mata Amritanandamayi Devi is popularly known among her followers world over, said we should be prepared to adjust our attitude with the changing times, have a mind ready to act and move forward along the path that Swami Vivekananda directed us. "Swamiji clearly showed us the paths needed for our society, country and world to grow. The curse upon our society is ignorance regarding our traditions and the basic principle of spirituality. This needs to change. I have visited so many countries of the world including Australia, Africa and America and they all take pride in their heritage. But we here in India, neither have understanding nor pride of our culture. In fact, many people even deride it. Only if we lay a strong foundation can we erect a tall building. Similarly, only if we have knowledge and pride of our forefathers and history, can we create lustrous present and future," she added.

Expressing happiness over the setting up of a foundation in New Delhi for the sake of inter-religious cooperation and unity and for portraying the values of Sanatan Dharma on a global level, Amma said, "Swami Vivekananda had proclaimed that he would not believe in a religion or God that failed to appease the hunger of the starving and wipe the tears of the destitute and widows." Amma further stressed that Swamiji had said that compassion and service to humanity are the basic ideals of sannyasa. "What India needs today is strength, vigour and bravery. If our youth arise and act, they have the strength and vigour to create huge transformation in the society," she said appealing to the parents to impart their children the wealth of culture and proper values. She also expressed concern over the condition of the youth in the country and said 'youth' is fast disappearing from the youth.

Amma said the youth should be prepared for self-unfoldment and personal development. "There are so many texts in Sanatana Dharma that reveal the depth and vastness of true knowledge about spirituality and the nature of the world. But the mind of young people may not accept these texts in their original form. We should be able to express these scriptural teachings to the youth in an understandable language according to the times. This is the role of the older generation today and they should employ the approach of dialogue," she said.

She described true education as the foundation of all positive changes. "It is the secreta mantra to obtain success in life and it is the solution to all problems." She, however, expressed concern over the modern education and said the only goal attributed to modern education is worldly success. "Our education system has been reduced to a tool for obtaining the success they want. But will such success last? Through this, will we obtain love and respect from society? We may obtain temporary gains, but as time passes we will be rejected by the society. We should understand the hollow, artificial meaning and shallowness of the modern concept of success to which today's youth are clinging," she said adding that our Indian youth should develop a deep connection with their culture and country. At the same time, they need an

independent intellect and open mind. They should have the ability to accept goodness wherever they see it, rejecting evil.

She said each Indian citizen should remember that our heritage is incomparable and we should view other countries from the standpoint of having firm love for our own country and its culture.

Presiding over the function Shri P Parameswaran said the time has come when India has to play the role of an international messenger of harmony and we Indians should prepare ourselves for it. Talking about the problems facing the country and the world today he said mutual dialogue and understanding is necessary for solving all the problems. He said the Vivekananda International Foundation has been visualised to initiate a dialogue world over in the same direction.

He said Swami Vivekananda was one of the most eminent international personalities produced by India and he did not become an international figure with the support of any organisation or government. He was great because of his ideas and vision. Talking about the talks of relevance of nationalism at the time of globalisation, he said Swami Vivekananda was a staunch nationalist and nationalism has been relevant at all times. He emphasised that time has come when our culture and civilisation should spread world over and the creation of this foundation would prove a milestone in this endeavour.

Delivering the keynote address Shri MN Venkatachaliah said the 21st century would be the century of science and there would be explorations of knowledge in this century. He said Swami Vivekananda was not an ordinary Hindu monk but a great scholar of Hindu heritage.

Introducing the aims and objectives of the Foundation Shri Ajit Doval said the foundation will undertake solution oriented research and studies through five centres-Centre for Study of International Relations and Diplomacy, Centre for Neighbourhood Studies, Centre for National Security Studies, Centre for Governmental and Developmental Studies and Centre for Historical and Civilisational Studies.

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