



**BRAJ KISHOR GUPTA**

Doesn't Mr. Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat deserve plaudits for invoking the Spirit of Swami Vivekananda? Thanks to his much hyped Vivekananda Yatra- Sep 2012, that he became the subject matter of intense debate in the media. It could be seen as a strategic move to flag off Vivekananda Yuva Vikas Yatra from Becharaji, a place in north Gujarat better known for housing India's largest upcoming car factories having immense potential to generate opportunities to meet the aspirations of the youth. It was equally significant to choose September for the launch of the Event. In view of the great historical significance of the date 11th Sep in the life of Vivekananda, it was prudent on the part of Mr Modi to choose 11 September 2012 to proclaim:

**"Swami Vivekananda not only dreamt of a strong and glorious India but also saw the youth as those who would fulfill his dreams".**

In his speech, he highlighted the need for peace, harmony and brotherhood in the state apart from meeting the growing challenges of employment and development. No wonder, some people have started talking about his avowed faith in the secular credentials of the country, besides his significant contributions towards the economic advancements of the State. There are however many in this vast country who would refuse to get impressed by Mr Modi no matter what he might say and do for the aam admi in his state; they tend to see him with an Albatross hanging round his neck. Could we dismiss such people as highly intransigent creatures, who prefer to live more in the past than in today's Gujarat, seemingly vibrant and shining? It would only be fair not to get carried away with either of the perspectives; we must take a holistic view of the matter.

In his thought-provoking article The Gujarat Miracle published in a leading National English daily, the writer, Arvind Panagari, who is professor of Economics at Columbia University, has discussed at length various factors responsible for making Gujarat Miracle a fascinating story. He has highlighted the progress of the state particularly in areas such as Agriculture, Manufacturing and Literacy.

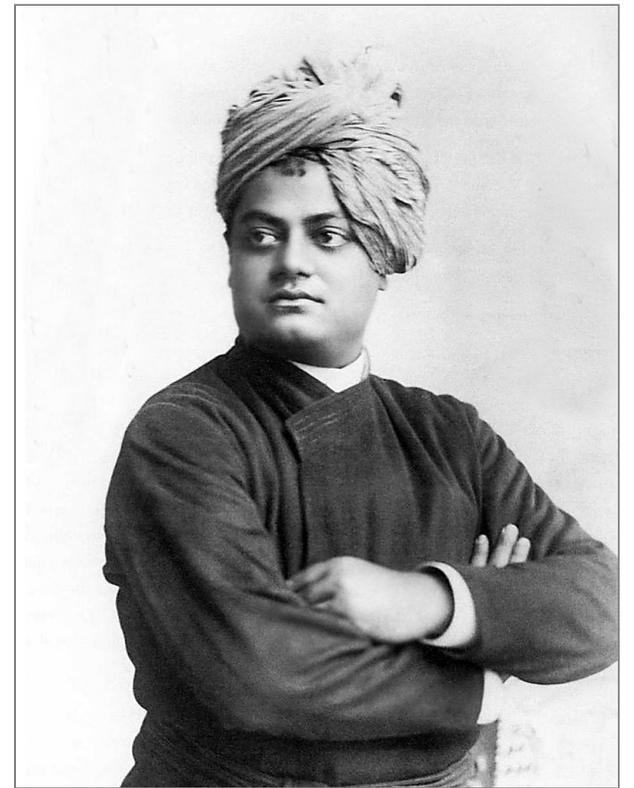
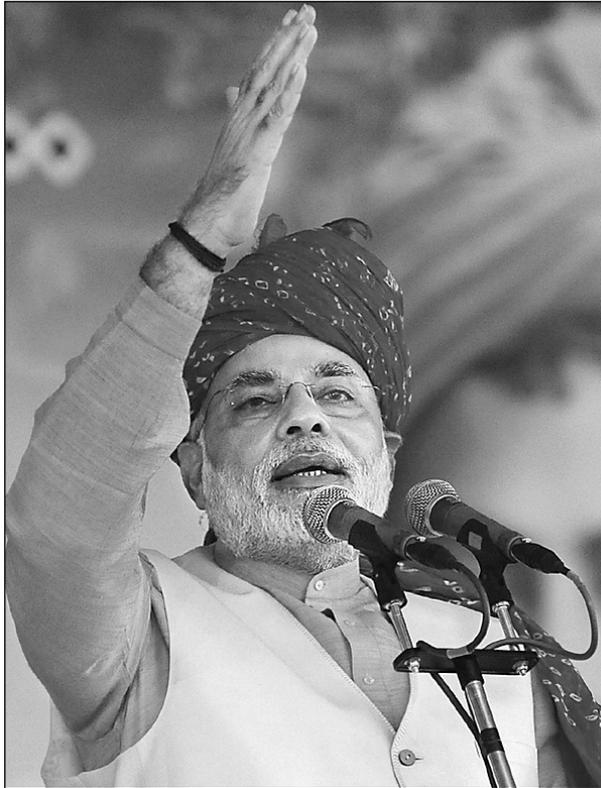
The writer has done well in presenting his cogent argument to prove that the state of Gujarat under the stewardship of Narendra Modi has emerged as a Paradigm of Growth, the sound economic principles of which are worthy of emulation by all neighboring states including Rajasthan.

It is just heartening news for all fans and followers of Narendra Modi that the United Kingdom is now keen on building healthy relationships with Gujarat. It comes as a huge relief to Mr. Modi, who has already suffered diplomatic isolation for more than a decade. This volte face in the attitude of UK towards Modi Government is being construed as a global acknowledgement of the unprecedented economic breakthrough of the state, which augers well. This is also being seen as a meteoric rise in Modi's stature in Indian National politics and his potential to influence overseas politics. Is this just a happy coincidence that Vivekananda, who seems to have become a role model for the Gujarat Government, could become a household name in India only after he shot to international fame with his historic speech at the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago on 11th Sep, 1893, which certainly impacted the world opinion and perceptions on India's reservoirs of spiritual wisdom and epistemological knowledge. Given the fact that the country was still reeling under the British Raj, this went a long way in bolstering the image of India abroad.

Against this backdrop, it would be very interesting to see and understand the growing significance of the life and work of Swami Vivekananda. Today, Indian society is facing great many challenges just as the world outside is grappling with a number of issues, unheard of before. The clash between two communities in this vast country is as common as the clash of Civilizations in the international arena. Politics is fast becoming the religion of our time. Social unrest, civil protest, hunger strike, Bharat bandh and non violent agitation against corruption are the legitimate expressions of deep rooted frustrations of the poor and sunken masses in India, who have a feeling of betrayal. It is the marginalized sections of society irrespective of their religions and castes who suffer the most excruciating pain. They cannot go gaga over the fact that the ruling Government in a State or at the Centre comes out with many ambitious and people-friendly policies and plans. At the end, what matters for them is what they get out of those policies. It is at this critical juncture that we as a Nation seem to be failing, which reminds me of the prophetic lines of W B Yeats:

**Turning and turning in the**

## REVISITING THE GOSPEL OF VIVEKANANDA



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### widening gyre

**The falcon cannot hear the falconer;**

**Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;**

**Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world .....**

**The best lack all convictions, while the worst**

**Are full of passionate intensity!**

Against this background, the words of Vivekananda assume much greater significance and relevance today than ever before. It would only be proper here to recall the famous remark of Romain Rolland on Vivekananda:

**Vivekananda's words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!**

Vivekananda was truly a prophet of the masses. His love and compassion for the common people was exemplary. He consecrated his life to spiritual resurrection of India. He dreamt of a Nation where the poorest and the meekest would find their redemption. Vivekananda was a rare Hindu who redefined Sanatan Dharma as a Gospel that would embrace the entire humanity, particularly those despised by the sophisticated members of society.

**"May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls. And above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the especial object of my worship."**

There is no denying the fact that Swami Vivekananda ranks among the most secular and Spiritual leaders the world has ever produced. He was a humanist to the core who lived and worked for the spiritual unity of humankind. And yet

Vivekananda is fondly remembered in India as a patriot saint. His great disciple Sister Nivedita succinctly put it, **"But the queen of his adoration was his Motherland".**

The world today is witnessing preposterous upsurge of religious fanatics and fundamentalists. Given a gnawing sense of intolerance among the members of different faiths across society, one feels the need to revisit the Voice of Sanity and Universal Goodness Vivekananda spoke about so passionately in the final session of the Parliament:

**"The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor is a Buddhist or a Hindu to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. If the Parliament has shown anything to the world, it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that**

**every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart."**

Needless to say, it was a fervent appeal for showing the milk of human kindness, which constitutes the fundamental tenet of every religion. The qualities of acceptance, compassion, co existence, empathy, love and kindness are sadly missing today from human society. Any political party or a leader who believes in and promotes the Cosmic Gospel of Vivekananda would certainly help India become much more vibrant a Democracy as also the most Secular Nation in the world!

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*"The views expressed by author are personal"*