

ADDRESS TO MINISTERS, MPS, MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND LEADERS FROM VARIOUS WALKS OF LIFE FROM MAURITIUS, MAURITIUS

13-03-2006 : Mauritius

Evolution of Enlightened Societies

I am delighted to address and interact with the Hon'ble Ministers, Members of Parliament, Scientists and Technologists, Educationist and Eminent Personalities of Mauritius. I am happy to be with such an enlightened audience and I am sure that it will usher in a new interest and understanding between Mauritius and India. Both our countries got independence during the 20th century from colonial rule. Now we are marching towards achieving economic prosperity for our people. I convey the greetings and wishes of one billion people of India. Our two great countries have long standing traditional ties for centuries in trade, commerce and mutual knowledge sharing and transfer. Knowledge and skill power empower the individual and institutions, thereby society and nations. When I was entering into your great country surrounded by sea, I remembered my home on a tiny island, Rameswaram on the East coast of India. We have a common bond, not only people to people, above all the waves of the same Ocean embrace both of us.

Common values of two nations

Mauritius and India have a historical umbilical connectivity. Let me recall a famous thought of the Father of Mauritius, Dr Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, in his UN address on 24th April 1968 :

"..... Thus this remote island in the Indian Ocean will become one of the most important meeting places of East and West."

"..... We in Mauritius, have a long tradition of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding, despite the occasional evil exploitation of our diversity. Our social customs and habits have transcended racial and cultural differences...."

Let me also share with you, particularly the youth of your great country, the advice of Mahatma Gandhi's mother to him:

"Son, in your entire life time if you can save or better someone's life,
your birth as a human being and your life is a success.

You have the blessing of the Almighty God".

These profound thoughts from two great human beings, as voices of Asia and Africa, bring out how citizens of a nation have to be transformed into citizens of tolerance and service. It is indeed a great mission for both our nations. I have selected for this meeting, of eminent personalities, the topic "Evolution of Enlightened Societies".

Global Ambience

All of us are witnessing a new situation throughout the world. Economically prosperous nations with their mighty security forces are under different forms of threat. Developing countries with certain value systems are under fear about their future. In this global environment I would like to share my personal experience based on visits to all the States in my country. I have met over one million children below seventeen years of age and I have also met thousands of young students in thirteen countries. All the youth, during my interactions, unanimously shared their dream with me to live in a happy, prosperous and safe nation. To give our youth, a peaceful nation, a happy nation, a prosperous nation and a safe nation is indeed an important mission for any nation and its leaders. For achieving this, I have evolved a three dimensional doctrine. This has three components (i) Education with a value system (ii)

Religion transforming into spirituality and (iii) Economic development for societal transformation. All these three components have to be progressed in an integrated way throughout the world. Friends, let us discuss.

(i) Education with Value System

The best part a person's life is his or her childhood and the learning period in school. The prime learning environment is five to seventeen years' of age. Of course, at home, love and affection are imparted. But again most of the time during the day, is spent in completing homework given by the school and studying, eating, playing and sleeping. A student spends approximately 25,000 hours in the school campus. Hence school hours for children are the best time for learning and need the best of environment and mission oriented learning with a value system. During this stage, they need value based education in school and at home for them to become good citizens. This reminds me of the echo of a great teacher's saying, "Give me a child for seven years. Afterwards, let God or devil take the child. They cannot change my child." For parents and teachers, the school campus and home have to have an integrated mission, that is education with a value system. They must inculcate moral leadership amongst children, which involves two aspects. First it requires the ability to have compelling and powerful dreams or visions of human betterment. A state of things in which human beings could be better off in the future than they are now. Secondly, moral leadership requires a disposition to do the right thing and influence others also to do the right thing. If the child misses value based education in the school, no government or society can establish a transparent society or a society with integrity.

Elevating Young Minds : While I was in college, I remember lectures given by the highest authority of the Jesuit institution in which I studied, Rev. Father Rector Kalathil of St. Joseph's college, Trichirappalli, Tamil Nadu. Every Monday, he would take a class on moral science for an hour. He used to talk about good human beings, present and past, and what makes a good human being. In this class he used to give lectures on personalities like Buddha, Confucius, St. Augustine, Califa Omar, Mahatma Gandhi, Einstein, Abraham Lincoln including some scientific personalities and moral stories linked to our civilizational heritage. It is essential in secondary schools and colleges to have lectures by a great teacher of the institution once a week for an hour on the civilizational heritage of the nation. This class can be called as a Moral Science Class. That will elevate young minds to love the country, to love other human beings and elevate the young to higher planes. Throughout the world in every school it is essential that moral science is taught. We need a forum to promote moral science class as a part of the curriculum in all schools around the world. Now I would like to share an experience that I witnessed, that of religion transforming into a dynamic spiritual force.

(ii) Religion Transforming into Spirituality: Universal Mind

I would like to recall an incident which happened four decades ago. Prof. Vikram Sarabhai is the visionary of the Space Programme in India. He is well known for his cosmic ray research, an area that led to evolving the space research programme for India. Prof. Vikram Sarabhai was looking for a site to establish space research stations in the equatorial region. He visited a number of places. Thumba in Kerala in Southern India was selected by the scientific community for space research as it was near the equatorial region and was ideally suited for ionospheric research in the upper atmosphere apart from the study of atmospheric structure. When Prof. Vikram Sarabhai visited Thumba, the locality had series of villages, and thousands of fishermen folk were living in that area. It also had a beautiful ancient church, St. Mary Magdalene Church and a Bishop's House. Prof. Vikram Sarabhai met many politicians and bureaucrats to get the place for space science research. It did not move further because the nature of the place. He was asked to see the Bishop of Trivandrum, at that time in 1962, Rev. Father Dr. Peter Bernard Pereira. It was a Saturday when Prof. Vikram Sarabhai met the Bishop. The Bishop smiled and asked him to meet him the next day in the church, which was a Sunday. After the morning Service, the Rev. Bishop invited Prof. Sarabhai to come to the dias. The Bishop introduced Prof. Sarabhai to the congregation and told them, "My children, I have a famous scientist with me who wants our church and the place I live for the work of space science research. Dear children, science seeks truth by reasoning and results into things like

electricity, what we are using, or even our fishing boat and net construction, and our children's teaching tools, and what I do as a preacher, I pray for all of you to have peace and happiness in life. Dear Children, Prof. Vikram Sarabhai and myself want to have a prosperous people with peace. In one way, science and spiritualism seek the same divine blessings for doing good for the people. Now, dear children Prof. Vikram Sarabhai says he needs God's habitat that is our church, my habitat that is the Bishop's house, and your habitat, your houses. He promises he will give us back all what he takes. Dear children can we give, can we give? There was pin drop silence. All of them spontaneously stood up. A single voice reverberated in the holy St. Mary's Church, Amen-Amen-Amen. Subsequently, the big event took place in 1962. His Excellency Rct. Rev. Dr Peter Bernard Pereira, the Bishop of Trivandrum, took the noble decision to dedicate the church in recognition of the national goal for the establishment of the Indian Space Research Organisation at Pallithura, Thumba. That was the church where we had our design centre, started rocket assembly, design of filament winding machine for FRP product and the Bishop's House was our scientists' place. Later, the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station (TERLS) led to the establishment of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and multiple space centres throughout the country.

When I think of this event, I can see how enlightened spiritual and scientific leaders, all converge towards giving reverence to human life. New church and new schools were established in record time. Of course the birth of TERLS and then VSSC gave the country the capability of design, development and produced a world class huge rocket system and subsequently, India got the capability of launching geo-synchronous, sun-synchronous and meteorology spacecraft, communication satellites, remote sensing satellites thereby provided fast communication, weather forecasting and also locate water resources for the country.

Today, among us, Prof. Vikram Sarabhai is not there, Rev. Dr. Peter Bernard Pereira is not there, but those who are responsible for creation and make the flower and blossom will themselves be a different kind of a flower as described in the Bhagwat Gita: "See the flower, how generously it distributes perfume and honey. It gives to all, gives freely of its love. When its work is done, it falls away quietly. Try to be like the flower, unassuming despite all its qualities". What a beautiful message for all generations of this nation, on integration of minds and the universal mind. It is a great message to be spread. The message is, the best component of religion can be transformed into a spiritual force that will shape society.

So far I have discussed, the necessity of education with a value system for world youth and also best elements of religion transforming into a spiritual force.

Let me now discuss with you the third component of enlightened society for transforming a developing nation into a developed nation through achieving economic prosperity, so that large societal imbalances can be removed leading to a poverty free world. In this connection, let me take the example of India. With one sixth of the global population, a movement has commenced, for transforming India into a developed nation.

(iii) Economic development: Transforming to a developed nation

Economic development is a vital requirement for any nation. I would like to present the strategy followed by India. This experience may be useful to Mauritius. Of the over one billion population of India, 260 million are living below the poverty line. In your country, I came to know that only 10 percent of the people are below the poverty line. They need education, they need habitat, they need health care, and creation of employment potential. Presently, India's GDP is growing at an average rate of 8 percent whereas economists suggest that to remove the poverty of 260 million people we have to grow at the rate of 10 percent consistently for over a decade.

To enable this situation, India has a vision of transforming into a developed nation by the year 2020. Five areas have been identified as missions based on India's core competence for integrated action: (1) Agriculture and Food Processing (2) Education and Healthcare (3) Infrastructure including quality electric power and a rural development programme called PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) (4) Information and Communication

Technology (5) Self reliance in critical technologies. These five areas are closely inter-related and being implemented in a mission mode that will lead to social, economic and national security.

One of the components through which the rural-urban divide will be bridged and prosperity will be brought to the seven hundred million people living in six hundred thousand villages is Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA).

The Mission of PURA (Providing Urban amenities in Rural Areas)

The number of potential PURA units for the whole country is estimated to be 7000. This envisages integrated connectivities to bring prosperity to rural India. These are - physical connectivity of village clusters through quality roads and transport; electronic connectivity through tele-communication with high bandwidth fiber optic cables reaching rural areas from urban cities and through Internet kiosks; and knowledge connectivity through education, vocational training for farmers, artisans and craftsmen and entrepreneurship programmes. These three connectivities will lead to economic connectivity through starting of enterprises with the help of banks, micro credit and marketing of the products.

Each PURA cluster will connect about 20-30 villages having a population of 30,000 people and will cost about twenty million dollars. There are three types of PURA's: Plain terrain PURA, Coastal PURA and Hill PURA. For example for Mauritius Coastal PURA and plain terrain PURA are relevant. This is a viable and sustainable business proposition. After initial short-term employment during construction etc., we have to plan for initiating actions for providing regular employment and self employment opportunities in nationally competitive small enterprises in agro processing, manufacturing and services sectors for about 3000 people. By creating industrial/business parks employment opportunities in the support and services sector will increase to about 10000 people. This will provide sustainable economy for the rural sector. In this national mission, bankers can promote entrepreneurship in rural areas. This will lead to the removal of the urban-rural divide. PURA complexes should also have spiritual connectivity in addition to the four connectivities which I have described. I have personally come across four operational PURAs in my country, which demonstrates the viability of the PURA concept through private enterprises. India will be very happy to share this experience of a societal transformation mission of economic development, with Mauritius. While discussing with various leaders and experts during the last two days, I have realized that there are certain possibilities of partnership between Mauritius and India on certain common development programmes, which I would like to discuss.

Mauritius - India Partnership

Mauritius is acknowledged all over the world as one of the remarkable success stories in the history of nation building. Its rapid economic development, its ability to reconcile demographic diversity with social harmony and its solid institutional strengths are a model for other countries. We are also aware of the new challenges that the Mauritian economy faces in the present global context, particularly in the key areas of sugar, textiles and fisheries. Since Mauritius has a comprehensive 10 year plan for nurturing the sugar industry, particularly diversification we in India have certain experiences in the sugar industry, particularly successful cooperative movements and exploitation of bye-products like power generation and ethanol production. We would also like to share with you the research experience of the Vasantdada Sugar Institute of Maharashtra in Western India. Important results arising from the research are (a) less water cultivation (b) 12-18 months growth cycle (c) reduction of input cost for sugarcane cultivation and also sugar production and (d) regulated growth cycle of sugarcane so that factories can get continuous supply of sugarcane.

Regarding textiles, I would suggest using the cooperative model which is in practice in Tirupur in Tamil Nadu in Southern India. We have also some models in Punjab in Northern India where a collaborative effort between farmers, industrial representatives, extension workers and research scientists has resulted in doubling per hectare seed cotton productivity. In respect of fisheries, there will be a need for promoting an integrated approach in deep sea fishing,

processing, packaging and marketing at high seas as is being presently done in Iceland, whose economy thrives mainly on fish export. Our institutions will share their individual experiences with your experts for finding innovative solutions to the challenges faced by you. This will definitely give further thrust to your economic growth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to refer to my address to the Pan-African Parliament on 16th September 2004 in Johannesburg. We suggested the establishment of a Pan African e-Network for providing tele-education, tele-medicine and Heads of the State network to 53 Pan African nations. This programme has commenced and will provide connectivity to the whole of Africa. We have signed an MOU for the Pan African e-network for Mauritius. I am very happy that tele-medicine connectivity has just been established at Port Louis and will be extended to other places. We have great missions for transforming our nations into economically developed nations; above all our two countries have to join hands in the evolution of enlightened societies which I have discussed in detail. We need a joint world forum: "Organization for Evolution of Enlightened Societies", for realizing this purpose.

The type of mission in front of us is very complex and challenging. Let us share a great thought propounded by Saint Maharishi Patanjali in the Yoga Sutra in 500 BC:

"When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bounds. Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents come alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamt yourself to be."

My best wishes to the people of Mauritius.