

RESPECTING PERSONAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. These words delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru, surely remind us of his political partner, Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said, our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation.

We need to understand and acknowledge the fact that diversity existed, is and will continue to exist. The decision of using this opportunity lies in our hands.

Let us take a walk down the memory lane. In the days gone by, people used this diversity, then to their advantage which led them to achieve their common goal of freedom from struggle. In 1857, there was a revolt in India against the government. People felt their culture was being interfered with. People felt that their culture was not taken into consideration while making laws. These nationalists came together, not based on religion, but on sheer motives. Actions were taken, irrespective of their culture, ideology, caste and religion.

Swaraj was our birth right, and we asked for it. Well not so rightfully. Although people had different beliefs and practices, their motives were one. The Simon Go Back movement, the Quit India Movement and the Forward Bloc, were all instances where the unity helped to solve alarming issues, efficiently with a pool of ideas and assertive ideology.

During the 26/11 attacks, there was a large scale atrocity. The Taj had been taken over. Being over there, I sensed it. Fear had crept into everyone's mind. Silence was common to all. Only the sounds of firing were audible. At that time, a man approached me. He did not ask me about my race, neither did I. He performed his selfless and altruistic duty, and granted me life, once again. If we did not interrogate each other on our castes, beliefs and religions, at that time, why are we doing it now? Aren't we humans in common?

We can see the unity improving every minute, but who has seen the future? It might worsen! The only way to predict it is by taking steps towards it. Unity can exist in the form of aesthetics too, there are endless possibilities! One just has to think!

When the real history of India will be unearthed, it will be proved that, as in matters of religion, so in fine arts, India is the primal Guru of the whole world.

A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is just fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

Because, to my country and my people, I pledge my devotion. In their wellbeing and prosperity alone, lies my happiness....

- Ravijaa Mehta (FYBMS A)