

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT THE RELEASE FUNCTION AND RECEIVE THE FIRST COPY OF 'TULSI SMRITI GRANTH'

Rashtrapati Bhavan Auditorium, Delhi : 26.10.2014

1. I am happy to be present at this function for the release of 'Tulsi Smriti Granth', which has been brought out on the eve of the Birth Centenary Celebration of Acharya Tulsi. At the outset, let me thank the Acharya Tulsi Janam Shatabdi Samaroh Samiti for the opportunity to receive the first copy of this book. I also avail of this occasion to compliment all those who contributed or have been associated with this commemorative volume on the great saint, Acharya Tulsi.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

2. India is an ancient civilization marked by rich culture, philosophy and spirituality. Sages, monks and spiritual leaders have made significant contributions over the ages towards India's spiritual beliefs. They have provided valuable direction benefitting the masses.

3. In our country's glorious tradition of self-enlightenment, Lord Mahavira occupies an eminent position. Through his divine preaching of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *anekant* (non-absolution) and *aparigraha* (non-possession), he aimed at spiritual upliftment of the people. Deeply concerned with social issues of the time, Lord Mahavira professed solutions that helped alleviate problems of the masses.

4. Following Lord Mahavira's spiritual footprints, a chain of Jain Acharyas appeared from time to time through the centuries. They helped in nourishing Indian culture with fundamental and interminable values. Acharya Bhikshu was one of those eminent Acharyas. He stood against the misinterpretation of religious texts and doctrines. He provided true meaning to the age-old and fundamental strings of spirituality. The 'Terapanth' sect was born out of that pious resolve. The ninth successor of Acharya Bhikshu was Acharya Tulsi.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. Acharya Tulsi was born in 1914, at a time when India was starting to transcend from a traditional to a modern nation. At the tender age of eleven, he started delving into the problems of the world and seeking solutions, and transformed into a Jain monk.

6. Under the spiritual guidance of Acharya Kalughani, he undertook in-depth study of *agamas* and other texts of philosophy and *nyaya* in a short span of eleven years. This made him a scholar of multiple subjects. Due to his extraordinary talent and vision, he became the successor Acharya at the age of 22. From then on, he started a journey of exploration of new vistas for human development.

7. Acharyaji was a humanitarian, a peace activist, and a torch-bearer of moral awakening in our country. He rendered service for more than sixty years, during which he toiled hard for the

transformation of the nation by transforming the individual. He set up a mission for 'Moral awakening of the country' and embarked on a long journey walking barefoot across the nation. He travelled more than one lakh kilometers reaching out to the elite of the society and the marginalized alike and to the rural and urban belt of the country. Wherever he went, whomever he met, he echoed the voice of purity in conduct.

8. Under the banner of Anuvrat Movement, which he led from its beginning in 1936 until his demise in 1997, Acharya Tulsi met writers, politicians, philosophers, poets and spiritual leaders. He shared his concern for national integration. He voiced his opinion against social evils like suppression of women, dowry system, torturing of widows, untouchability and veiling of women. He launched a special campaign for de-addiction. Due to Acharyaji's inspiration, thousands of people got registered and de-addicted successfully.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

9. Acharya Tulsi was an eloquent public speaker. Through his thought provoking and inspirational discourses, he enlightened the people. His thoughts and philosophy are contained in more than hundred books written in different languages and in varied styles. His writing espouses virtues like rationality, practicality, solution-orientation, relevance and harmony. He was a keen proponent of world peace.

10. When the Atom Bomb was used in 1945, Acharya Tulsi wrote an article titled 'Message of peace to unquiet world'. Reading about the ways Acharyaji suggested for maintenance of world peace, Mahatma Gandhi had observed and I quote: "*How good it would be if the world lives in accordance with this great man's precepts*" (unquote).

11. As recognition of Acharya Tulsi's significant endeavour in bringing individual transformation, social reformation, religious harmony and national integration, he was conferred several honours like Indira Gandhi National Unity Award, Bharat Jyoti, Vak Pati Samman and Hakim Sur Khan Award. To dedicate his life completely in the service of humanity and spirituality, he renounced his acharya-ship willingly and appointed Acharya Mahapragya as his successor.

12. He established a web of organizations to pursue his noble objectives. The Jain Vishwa Bharati Institute, the All India Terapanth Women Congregation which has around 60,000 members today, and the All India Terapanth Youth Congregation which has more than 300 branches and over 40,000 members, are working for Anuvrat, in the field of meditation, *jevan vigyan* (or the science of living) and *dahimsa samavaya*. The ascetic group, Anuvrat, with more than 800 members, represents a strong force championing humanitarian causes. One of the important tasks undertaken by them is the editing of *Jainaagamas*, which is a ground-breaking achievement and I congratulate the group for the same.

13. At this release of Tulsi Smriti Granth today, it is gladdening to see several leading spiritual lights, besides followers, attending the function. Every word inscribed in this book is an article of faith that followers should bear in their hearts for life. The lives of people in these modern times are both a matter of opportunity and challenge, of stability and turbulence. Acharyaji's teachings

and words of wisdom hold great relevance for moral upliftment of individuals and transformation of nations alike. I earnestly hope that the messages contained in the Granth will travel far and wide and imbibed by the people.

14. I am also happy to learn that Acharya Mahashraman, who is the eleventh supreme head of the 'Terapanth', is undertaking an Ahimsa Yatra from Delhi in November, this year. I wish this expedition all success. May this journey on foot benefit the masses and people of our country.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.