

Observations & Views:

Some Famous Quotations About India

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Will Durant, American historian: "India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all".

Albert Einstein, American scientist: "We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made."

Max Mueller, German scholar: If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions, I should point to India.

Romain Rolland, French scholar: "If there is one place on the face of earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India."

Hu Shih, former Ambassador of China to USA: "India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border."

Mark Twain, American author: "India is, the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grand mother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only."

"So far as I am able to judge, nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his rounds. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked."

"India has two million gods, and worships them all. In religion all other countries are paupers; India is the only millionaire."

Jain Unity

"Digambars and Shwetambars, all are Jains" is a popular theme. Many people talk about it but it seems nobody is doing anything to bring about real unity among Jains. In fact, two constructive steps have to be taken to achieve Jain unity:

Firstly, we have to understand the basic principles of the Jain religion.

Secondly, we have to rise above our individual preferences and make certain sacrifices.

Step 1. We Jains should understand the following Jain concepts:

- a. All scholars agree that the doctrine followed by all Jain groups is one and the same.
- b. Bhagwaan Mahaveer was neither a Digambar nor a Shwetambar.
- c. Some minor differences in beliefs do exist between the various Jain groups. Jains believe that the absolute truth is known only to omniscients (KEVALIs). In view of this belief, it is futile to make any effort to establish the validity of one belief or the other. Unfortunately, these minor differences are propagated and reaffirmed by so-called scholars and monks in an effort to establish the superiority of their own ideas. Rational, intelligent and educated individuals should rise above these notions of superiority.
- d. During any religious celebration, it is our feelings and thoughts that are important. The time and procedure (VIDHI) of performing a prayer or worship have been prescribed only for the sake of uniformity and organization. They have little significance. Thus in the light of the spirit of the fundamental principles of Jainism, performing one type of worship is as good as another type of worship.
- e. Understanding the meaning and focusing on the basic principles of Jainism is essential for having good feelings and thoughts. All prayers and worships essentially have similar meanings. Most people, Digambars as well as Shwetambars, do not understand the meanings of the prayers and worships. Thus they are not aware of the similarities in them.

Step 2. Here are some constructive suggestions:

- a. All Jains should rise above sectarianism. We should not try to establish the superiority of any belief.
- b. All Jains should revere and study all ancient Jain scriptures.
- c. We should respect the monks and nuns for their inner qualities rather than outward physical appearances. We should respect a monk or a

nun who does not indulge in community politics, who is not working for his/her name and fame and who has no anger, pride, ego and ulterior motives.

- d. Those of us who were born into a Digambar family should learn the religious practices performed by Shwetambars and vice versa. We should learn the literal meaning of our prayers and worships. We should also find out to what extent these prayers and worships conform to the basics of Jainism. Our Jain centers should make a serious effort to provide such educational opportunity to the Jain community.
- e. All Jains including the youngsters should participate in all Jain celebrations.
- f. It is observed that each one of us makes an effort to "protect" one's own interests. Such practices lead to religious fanaticism and intolerance. All of us should make a genuine sacrifice by making a sincere effort to promote others' beliefs.

We have brought some undesirable practices from India and have transplanted them here. Further, we have picked up some of the fads and idiosyncrasies and have lost sight of our priorities. In my view, establishing a genuine unified Jain system should be our top priority.