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Asato ma sadgamaya: Why are we moving away from Sanskrit, while the world is embracing it

By Vicky Nanjappa | Published: Tuesday, January 29, 2019, 10:29 [IST]



New Delhi, Jan 29: A petition questioning a Sanskrit prayer in Kendriya Vidyalaya was referred to a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court. The petition questioned the daily singing of Asato Ma Sadgamaya. The court said that the petition raises questions of seminal importance as to the correct interpretation of Article 28(1).

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Kendriya Vidyalaya

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The court deiced to go ahead and hear the petition, despite Solicitor General, Tushar Mehta telling the court that the prayer has no religious connotation and is secular in nature.

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To understand the prayer better and the deeper issue behind it, OneIndia spoke with D K Hari, the co-founder and author, who runs, Bharath Gyan along with his wife Hema Hari. Before getting into the finer points, let us see what the prayer is and what it says when translated into English.

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#Kendriya Vidyalaya



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Asato ma sadgamaya (From ignorance, lead me to truth)

Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya (From darkness, lead me to light)

Mrtyorma amrtam gamaya (From death, lead me to immortality)

Om shanti shanti shanti (Om peace peace peace)

D K Hari asks, first of all what is the quotation. It says lead us from darkness to light. Lead us to knowledge, lead us from despair to hope. It is all very positive in nature. The prayer sets a framework in mind for a student to come there for the sake of knowledge to a school and seek knowledge in the right framework of mind.

It does not speak of divinity or any religion. It basically says, ' take us from ignorance to knowledge.' It is as simple as that.

This is a timeless saying from across religions, across countries, across civilisation. The student, a seeker who is dwelling himself in knowledge, seeking to pray to the divine to show the path to tread from ignorance to knowledge. That knowledge in turn leads you to greater path all way up to immortality, not of the body, but that of the soul, Hari explains.

Where is the religious connotation?

Hari asks, where is the question of religion coming into this. There is no issue with the quotation as such, It does not speak about 'A' religion.

In a school like Rishi Valley, which is an atheist school, we had this prayer in the morning as it is

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as it is religion neutral. Two it was context oriented. Because the context of the saying is for knowledge seeking. The school is a place for knowledge seeking, Hari further says.

There can be no perceivable problem in the quotation as such for it comes from the upanishad itself, which are treasured quotations of this land for many millennium.

Somebody may have a problem with the language. Sanskrit is an Indian language. Right through the ages many have said so many things about the language. It is also a mother language to most Indic and Indo-European languages.

To have such a timeless quote and mouthing it daily with full throated ness is an apt way to begin the day for students and to energise one self. Now when the premier schools all over the world, be it in Germany, England or America are one after another seeing the values of Sanskrit and have started adopting it one after another in their daily curriculum and invocation, it is only in India that we are shying away from our scientific traditional practises, Hari says.



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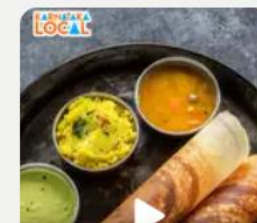
From Ambedkar to Kalam;

While identifying the national language in 1950, it was Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who had clearly moved a resolution that the national language of India should be Sanskrit. The resolution was however defeated by one vote. Dr. Ambedkar was the maker of our Constitution and there cannot be any opposition to the language which he himself wanted as the national language says Hari.

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People think Sanskrit means Hindu religion. This is more of a mindset issue of the petitioner. Many have repeatedly spoken about the scientific usage in the current world about the Sanskrit language and one of its most recent proponents of the scientific validity of the Sanskrit language was Dr. Abdul Kalam himself says D K Hari.

He was one of the leading scientists of the land, who was secular to the core and a statesman of international stature. He has been a poet, musician, scientist, statesman and a true secular person. He himself has used the quotation multiple times in different fora.

What can be the objection to Sanskrit. This is something that we must understand and address. It is a perceived hurt when none exists, for which they want to hurt someone else for their perceived hurt, says Hari. If this is the case then there is no space for such folly. They want to hurt someone else who in the first place is not hurting anyone at all.

The problem is somewhere else and their attack is misguided says Hari.

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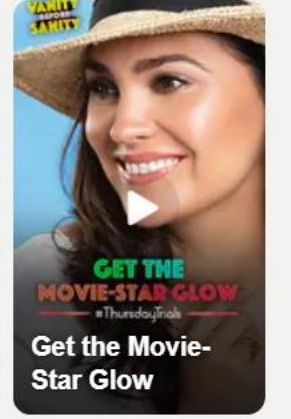
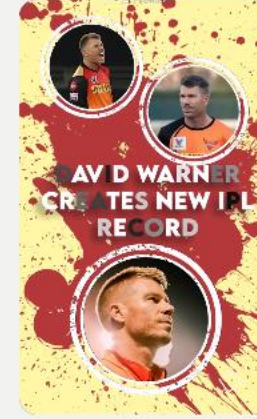


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