

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF 79<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS OF LATE FOUNDER, HIS HOLINESS BHAKTISVARUPA DAMODARA SWAMI AT MANIPUR STATE FILM DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY AUDITORIUM, IMPHAL ON 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2016 AT 1630 HOURS.

Sri Sri Janardan Deva Goswami ji,  
Sri B.B. Sharma ji, President, Bharat Vikas Samiti,  
Dr. Debasis Bezbarua, Guwahati University,  
Shri Ajit Das, Director, Ranganiketan,  
Friends from the Media,  
Distinguished Invitees,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am, indeed, very happy and fortunate to be here on the occasion of 79<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations of the late founder of Ranganiketan, International Centre for Manipuri Arts and Culture, His Holiness Bhaktisvarupa Damodara Swami Maharaja, also known as Dr. T.D. Singh.

Late Damodara Swami ji's teaching for promoting peace and harmony among various religious and ethnic groups is of great contemporary relevance and meaning in this age of turmoil. He identified the cause of many of the problems in the world such as terrorism, environmental issues, social and religious conflicts to be due to a lack of understanding between the fields of empirical science and religion. He was one of the world's pioneer exponents of science-spirituality dialogue and inter-faith peace initiatives. I am very happy to know that he wrote more than thirty books and delivered hundreds of lectures and organised discussions and conferences on the topics related to Science and Spirituality nexus. I belong to science background having done my Ph.D. in Zoology and I am a firm believer that science and religion can co-exist. They can have a symbiotic existence, drawing support from each other for a better human society. Damodara Swami ji initiated 5(five) core programs namely (1) Science and Spirituality Dialogue (2) Art and Culture (3) Inter-religious Dialogue (4) Education and (5) Peace and Welfare. These programs continue to be carried out by various organisations he founded

around the world, such as, Bhaktivedanta Institute, United Religious Initiative and this Centre for Manipuri Arts and Culture, Ranganiketan. Damodara Swami ji also strongly believed in the unifying power of art and culture for promotion of universal peace. He had said “People from various corners of the world will come closer to each other in friendship and understanding through the universal language of art and culture”.

Further, I am also very happy to know that Ranganiketan organises seminars and cultural programmes so that different communities can come closer and also appreciate one another through their aesthetic art and culture. The Centre has chosen a very relevant theme for the seminar today, “Towards a culture of inter-religious and inter-ethnic peace and harmony in Manipur Society” as inter-ethnic issues are confronting the state right now. It is worth appreciation that the cultural programme will involve diverse cultural arts from different parts of the country, overseas and host state and I am fully confident everybody will enjoy the programme.

Damodara Swami ji worked tirelessly for the welfare of the human society. It was also his earnest desire for peace and harmony to prevail in Manipur, his home state of multi-ethnicity. It is a matter of irony that this great man who sacrificed his whole life for the good of mankind was one of those who sustained injury in a bomb blast at the ISKCON temple at Imphal.

Let us not allow his efforts to go in vain and we should endeavour to accomplish the objectives set by him for promotion of peace and harmony. Only then, there would be true meaning for celebrating his Birthday.

I do not intend to take much of your time and let me join you in the celebration of 79<sup>th</sup> Birthday of late His Holiness Bhaktisvarupa Damodara Swami Maharaja and pay my homage to Swami ji.

Hare Krishna,  
Hare Rama,  
Thank you.