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Address on, Secularism and National Integration, at the Annual Celebration Day of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha, New Delhi, 24 October 2008.

Revered Swami Atmajnanandaji, Swami Saswatanandaji, Shri Vasant Satheji, Sannyasins of Bharat Sevashram Sangha and Friends:

It is a matter of honour for me to have been given the opportunity to associate myself with the annual day celebrations of the well-known and almost a century-old monastic order, Bharat Sevashram Sangha, one of our great socio-religious organizations, dedicated to the service of the people, propagating the great human values of fraternity, tolerance and inclusiveness. I am indeed thankful to Swami Atmajnanandaji for this rare privilege. On this occasion, I beg to pay my homage and profound respect to Acharya Sreemat Swami Pranavanandaji Maharaj, the Holy founder of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha. My father, late Sri N.C. Chatterjee, was close to Swamiji and I had the great privilege of having the Darshan of Swamiji at the Ashram premises at Rash Behari Avenue, Kolkata, when I had accompanied my father. Along with his spiritual calling, Swami Pranavanandaji Maharaj, had always taken great interest in our Freedom struggle and extended support and assistance to the freedom fighters and was a constant source of inspiration to them.

Bharat Sevashram Sangha, with the goal of universal emancipation, has been tirelessly working for the uplift of the downtrodden and the neglected sections of our society, ever since its foundation in 1917. Its efforts in reaching out to the people in distress, particularly during natural calamities are most commendable. The extensive relief and rehabilitation works undertaken by the Sangha during the Bengal famine, Midnapore cyclone, West Bengal Floods, Bhopal Gas Tragedy, Andhra Pradesh Cyclone, Orissa Super Cyclone, the devastating *tsunami* and the recent floods in Bihar, to name some of the occasions, stand testimony to the philanthropic commitment of the Sangha. It is indeed commendable that throughout its chequered history, the Bharat Sevashram Sangha has ever remained committed to its noble objectives and has been contributing significantly towards empowering the neglected and the weaker segments of society through its people-oriented programmes and activities. By its own example, it has been able to attract and motivate people to various social and philanthropic activities.