

YOUNGER GENERATION SHOULD BE ACQUAINTED WITH OUR HISTORY, CULTURE & HERITAGE: VICE PRESIDENT

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Vice President's Secretariat

Younger generation should be acquainted with our History, Culture & Heritage: Vice President

We need to conserve and protect Archaeological sites;

India's ancient history became a casualty of Colonial Rule;

Releases three-volume Book – Felicitating a Legendary Archaeologist B.B. Lal

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that the younger generation should be acquainted with our history, culture and heritage. He called for conservation and protection of archaeological sites as the sites stand testimony to India's rich and vibrant heritage.

He was addressing the gathering after releasing the three-volume book – 'Felicitating a Legendary Archaeologist B.B. Lal', edited by the eminent Archaeologist, Dr. B.R. Mani, the Air Vice Marshal (Retd.), Rajesh Lal, the Chairperson of Draupadi Dream Trust, Ms. Neera Misra & Dr. Vinay Kumar of Banaras Hindu University, here today.

Shri Naidu expressed his concern that the India's ancient history became a casualty of the Colonial Rule.

The Vice President said that the research is an ongoing quest for knowledge and every achievement sets a new yardstick for younger generation of scholars. It is truly heartening to read articles by so many young scholars, and I must appreciate the editors for having given platform to them, he said. He further highlighted the importance of Archaeological sites in teaching the younger generation about the great heritage, archeological skills, diverse culture and tradition of the country.

The Vice President urged upon the Ministry of Culture to highlight and promote them as tourist attractions and make visitors aware of the great antiquity of our nation and Delhi. He also wanted the administrators to develop them as Archaeology Parks to

showcase the antiquity of the regions. He also wanted them to make use of modern technology to create Archaeology Park experiences for public.

Shri Naidu said that efforts should be made to nourish the young talent by providing them research facilities, financial support and also by platforms to publish their articles and research papers on ancient Indian traditions, culture. Compiling and consolidating academic research would help the current and future generations, to understand the history, he opined.

Shri Naidu opined that books such as the one released, highlights the significance of nourishing ancient India's civilization apart from honoring stalwarts like Padma Bhushan Prof B.B. Lal, whose contribution has been important in unearthing some of the most significant landmarks of India's ancient History and Culture.

Leading Archaeologists, Historians and scholars of Ancient Indian Civilization and Culture were present at the venue.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"It gives me great pleasure to be amongst the leading Archaeologists, Historians and scholars of Ancient Indian Civilization and Culture.

I need not dwell upon the importance of archaeology in deciphering the past in terms of history, culture and the ways of living as all of you are experts.

I am delighted to release the three-volume book – Felicitating a Legendary Archaeologist B.B.Lal, edited by eminent archaeologist, Dr B.R. Mani, Air Vice Marshal (retd.) Rajesh Lal, Ms. Neera Misra, Chairperson-Trustee of the Draupadi Dream Trust and Dr Vinay Kumar, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University.

As I learn, this book is an effort to highlight the significance of nourishing ancient India's civilization and honor one of the tallest archaeologists of today, Padma Bhushan Prof B.B. Lal, whose contribution has been important in unearthing some of the most significant landmarks of India's ancient History and Culture.

I understand that Prof. Lal, commencing with the excavations from the Harappa days in 1946, has completed 73 continuous years of research and writing on Archaeology and in recognition of his work, it was decided to bring out this Felicitation Volume to honor his services for the cause of archaeology. We normally see holding of felicitation functions, but paying tribute to the body of work of Prof. Lal through a book is something unique and truly laudable.

Divided into three volumes, the first covers Prof Lal's writings that include the books he has authored and a list of seminal articles with peer reviews of his works. This volume also provides glimpses into his personal life as well as contribution from some of the well-known personalities highlighting their inter-personal relationships with the archaeologist.

The second and third volumes contain contributions from 37 national and international scholars, covering a very wide range of subjects – from Stone Age to Medieval temples and paintings. Significantly, while throwing light on his remarkable journey in explorations, excavations and findings at some of the landmark sites of our civilization, it transports us into the deep roots of our civilization and culture going back to 6-7 millennia BCE. As we get acquainted with Prof Lal's achievements, we also see the depths of our own civilization, giving us a feeling of pride in our ancient glory and prosperity.

Quite a few of the contributors are world-renowned while there are others whose papers will be read with immense interest. The articles in these volumes highlight the heritage of ancient Indian Civilization and Culture. The research work of the scholars needs to be highlighted.

Indeed, all papers provide a wealth of knowledge. I am sure that the book will not only find a place in libraries, but will also be read by everybody interested in ancient India. It is hoped that the papers will encourage inter-disciplinary awareness and exchange of views within the scholarly community as also among the general readers. Research is an ongoing quest for knowledge and every achievement sets a new yardstick for younger generation of scholars.

It is truly heartening to read articles by so many young scholars, and I must appreciate the editors for having given platform to them. Our effort must continue to nourish such talent and continue the ancient tradition of 'knowledge samhita' by compiling and consolidating academic research for current and future generations.

The three volumes are a tribute to the spirit and dedication of a 98-year-old learner and documenter, who has set highest standards in scholarly pursuits. Although an exhaustive knowledge tome for the archeologists and historians, the book indeed is an equal delight for an average individual interested in pursuit of historical knowledge.

Professor Lal's excavations cover a wide range -- from Paleolithic times to early historical. At Kalibangan, Rajasthan, he unearthed a prosperous city of the Harappan Civilization documenting the civilizational period of Early and Mature Harappan. The excavations revealed the earliest agricultural field and the earliest earthquake anywhere in the world.

He has also been instrumental in excavating sites connected with the Mahabharata, mainly, Hastinapura and Indraprastha, and that of the Ramayana which included a site at Ayodhya. The excavations relating to the Mahabharata sites have established that there was a kernel of truth in the Mahabharata, even though the epic may be considered by some to be full of interpolations.

His identification of Purana Qila as core of Indraprastha, one of the five villages that the Pandavas got, takes the antiquity of Delhi back to much more than the idea of just about 1000 BCE. I most certainly hope that the Archaeological Survey of India is maintaining the sites of Kalibangan and that of Indraprastha. These landmark sites should be exposed and conserved as Archaeology Parks, under proper protected

cover, to showcase the actual antiquity of the regions. Modern construction technology provides many possibilities to create open Archaeology Park experiences for public to know and get acquainted with our ancient past.

I also call upon the Ministry of Culture to highlight these Archaeological sites as tourist attractions and make the visitors aware of the great antiquity of our nation and Delhi.

In his book, *The Rigvedic People*, he comes to the conclusion that the Harappan Civilization, also referred to as the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization, was occupied by the Rigvedic people and that there was never any invasion or immigration from the West.

Professor Lal has many awards to his credit. To name a few, he is a recipient of two Honorary D. Litts, has been honored with titles of Mahamahopadhyaya and Vidyavaridhi and was awarded the Padma Bhushan in the year 2000. His work stands out as an example to young scholars on the opportunities in the field of archaeology. I wish Prof Lal good health and hope that he would continue to mentor and be the leading light to all five generations of archaeologists.

I must also laud the dedicated efforts of the Draupadi Dream Trust, especially Ms Neera Misra, in collecting some of the best minds together to compile this outstanding treatise on Bharata civilization.

I am pleased to learn that this Trust derives its name and inspiration from the historical and iconic Draupadi, mentioned as one of the revered Panch-kanya of ancient Bharata, the much worshipped Draupadi Amman of South India.

The able guidance of eminent scholar Dr B.R.Mani must have been equally noteworthy in the making of this significant work. I must also laud the efforts of Air Vice Marshal (retd) Rajesh Lal and scholar, Dr.Vinay Kumar in bringing out this important book.

I heartily congratulate all the Editors and contributors for published this 'samhita of ancient knowledge'.

The presence of this august gathering of archaeologists, historians and scholars of various fields makes this occasion a very special one, and I am really happy to have this opportunity to be with you all today to celebrate and do my bit in nourishing the roots of ancient India by releasing this book.

I thank the organizers, editors and all participants here and wish them all success in their pursuit of knowledge.

Thank You

Jai Hind!"

AKT/BK/MS/RK

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