

MAHATMA GANDHI IS ONE OF THE GREATEST REVOLUTIONARIES THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN, ONLY HIS REVOLUTIONS WERE BLOODLESS AND PEACEFUL; VP

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Vice President's Secretariat

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Addresses Commemorative Event of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Mahatma Gandhi is one of the greatest revolutionaries the world has ever seen, only his revolutions were bloodless and peaceful. He was addressing the Commemorative Event of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, organized by FICCI – Aditya Birla CSR Centre for Excellence, here today.

The Vice President said that six decades had passed since Mahatma Gandhi left his earthly abode, yet, his teachings remain fresh in the memory of his countrymen. He congratulated FICCI and Indian Industry for organizing such an event to celebrate the life and times of the Mahatma. He expressed hope that many more such events would happen so that the Mahatma's great vision for the world is recalled, relived and taken to the generation after generation.

Shri Naidu observed that Gandhiji's principles of liberty, dignity and equality were not limited by space and time, they have universal applicability and timeless value. He preached peace, non-violence, tolerance and harmony, and in the process, miraculously inspired India's great struggle for freedom and gave new impetus to civil rights movements all over the world, he added.

The Vice President opined that the designing and implementing programs and policies for

development should be done by keeping the vision articulated by Mahatma Gandhi for an India free from poverty, discrimination and social evils in mind. He said that Gandhi Ji was an ardent believer in the principle of self-reliance and added that he constantly spoke about “Swadeshi”. He yearned to build self-sufficient ‘Adarsh Villages’ and he said that the soul of India rested in its villages. It is time we honor his wishes & go back to our villages, Shri. Naidu added.

The Vice President recalled that Gandhi ji firmly believed that Cleanliness was next to Godliness. He felt that sanitation was more important than political freedom and today, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has become a mass movement of such scale and energy that it would have made the Mahatma himself very proud, he added.

Shri Naidu said that Gandhiji believed in equality & relentlessly spoke of women empowerment. He reminisced that Gandhiji himself was influenced by iconic women like Annie Besant & Sarojini Naidu. He urged the policy makers of India to place gender equality and women’s empowerment at the centre of our development agenda.

The Vice President remarked that *Antyodaya* or the uplifting of the poorest, most deprived groups of people, was a mission close to the Mahatma’s heart. “Gandhiji’s idea of development was of Sarvodaya, the development of all through Antyodaya. His philosophy of Antyodaya influenced leaders like Shri. Deen Dayal Upadhyay”, he added.

The Vice President urged one and all to strive together to realise Gandhiji’s dreams and usher in a ‘Ram Rajya’ where all are equal and there is no discrimination of any kind. He quoted the Mahatma who said that “Ramrajya of my dream ensures equal rights alike of prince and pauper”.

The Chairperson, FICCI, Smt. Rajeshree Birla, the Chairman, KVIC, Dr. Vinai Kumar Saxena, the Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Shri Parameshwaran Iyer and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Following is the text of Vice President’s address:

“I am happy to be here today on this momentous occasion as we celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation. Six decades have passed since this pious soul left his earthly abode. Yet, his principles, his sacrifices and his teachings remain fresh in the memory of his countrymen.

For decades, Gandhiji has directed India’s collective conscience and served as our moral compass. I firmly believe that the wisdom he imparted will help India navigate its way through the complexities of the modern world for centuries more to come.

Let me congratulate the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for organizing such an event to celebrate the life and times of the Mahatma. Many more such events should happen so that the Mahatma’s great vision for the world is recalled, relived and taken to the next generation.

Gandhiji’s principles of liberty, dignity and equality are not limited by space and time. They have universal applicability and timeless value. He preached peace, non- violence, tolerance and harmony, and in the process, miraculously inspired India’s great struggle for freedom and gave new impetus to civil rights movements all over the world.

“All my actions have their rise in my inalienable love of mankind.... I have known no distinction between relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and

Indians of other faiths I have ceased to hate anybody". This, in brief, sums up Gandhi's philosophy of life.

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the greatest revolutionaries the world has ever seen, only his revolutions were bloodless and peaceful. He struggled against injustice by practicing justice, he struggled against violence non-violently, he opposed discrimination by embracing one and all.

He firmly believed that 'an eye for an eye would end up making the whole world blind'. His resoluteness and steadfastness when it came to standing by his principles of truth and non violence inspired great world leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela among many others.

He often said that *"non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. it is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man"*.

Martin Luther King Jr., the civil rights hero of the United States of America, who adopted non-violence as the weapon of choice to help millions of African Americans fight for their rights once remarked, *"Christ gave us the goals and Mahatma Gandhi the tactic"*. He viewed Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and peaceful resistance as the only logical and moral approach in the struggle for justice and progress.

Nelson Mandela often cited Gandji ji as one of his great teachers and acknowledged that Gandhi's ideas had played a vital role in South Africa's transformation, aiding in the overthrow of apartheid.

Friends, Gandhiji envisioned a self-reliant India, a country that occupies a place of pride and dignity in the world order. Over time, it has been the endeavor of various governments to fulfil the dreams of our forefathers of a strong, vibrant and inclusive India.

It is commendable that the current government has launched an array of ambitious nation building initiatives with a view to fulfill the Mahatma's vision.

While designing and implementing programs and policies for development, it will serve us well to keep the vision articulated by Mahatma Gandhi for an India free from poverty, discrimination and social evils in mind.

Gandhi Ji was an ardent believer in the principle of self-reliance. He constantly spoke about "swadeshi". He yearned to build self- sufficient and harmonious 'Adarsh Villages'. He believed that the soul of India rested in its villages. To him, Khadi was not just a political icon or a symbol of national pride, it was also a way to empower the rural economy.

Today we see a disturbing trend of distress migration from rural to urban areas. Our rural economy is weak and fails to provide enough opportunities for livelihood. It is time India honors the Mahatma's wishes and goes back to its villages. Real growth will happen in India when we are able to empower rural India, especially our farmers, our weavers and our craftsmen.

Gandhi ji firmly believed that Cleanliness was next to Godliness. His statement that sanitation was more important than political independence clearly reflected the huge importance he attached to cleanliness. He also stated that a lavatory should be as clean as a drawing room.

He always lead by example and practiced cleanliness himself first before preaching it. During the last few years, the whole of our country united for the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, a mass movement of such scale and energy that it would have made the Mahatma himself very proud.

We have together built close to 9 crore toilets in the last 4 years! Cleanliness and good sanitation are essential prerequisites for development. At this juncture, I applaud the contributions made by the private sector companies and organizations like FICCI towards the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

All through his life, Gandhi ji insisted on acquiring better and higher skills. He said, *"If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning."* He himself practiced the pursuit of skill in whatever he did. Today, when we talk about the gap between what industry demands and what our education system provides, the necessity for skills training becomes evident.

We sit on a huge demographic opportunity today. 65% of our population is less than 35 years old. In order to reap this demographic dividend, we have to undertake massive skilling drives to make our people, especially the youth more employable and more productive. We also need to teach our young people the dignity of labor, that every job is important, has its own relevance and is dignified.

Gandhiji was an ardent believer in equality and relentlessly spoke of women empowerment. Gandhiji himself was influenced by iconic women. His mother Pultibai, his wife Kasturba and others like Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu influenced him greatly.

Gandhi ji said that *'Women is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity'*. Even while Indian women continue to lead in different walks of life ranging from sports to space, manufacturing to entrepreneurship and arts to innovation, we are yet to fully instill a sense of gender equality in the nation.

I urge all the planners and policy makes of our country to place gender equality and women's empowerment at the center of every single social and economic development plan.

Gandhiji also stood for principles of inclusion, diversity and equity. Gandhi ji lived his life to empower his countrymen to fight social and economic exclusion. Bapu always asked us to think of the last person in the queue, the poorest person, and serve the underprivileged.

His famous Talisman comes to mind now. He said *"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man /woman whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him /her?"* This quote expresses his deep concern for the oppressed, suppressed people of India who do not have access to the basic necessities of life.

Antyodaya or the uplifting of the poorest, most deprived groups of people, was also a mission close to the Mahatma's heart. Gandhiji's idea of development was of Sarvodaya, the development of all through Antyodaya. His philosophy of Antyodaya greatly influenced leaders like Shri. Deen Dayal Upadhyay. Antyodaya was at the core of Shri Upadhyay's philosophy of Integral Humanism. The philosophy of Antyodaya is still one of the guiding principles of India's socio- economic development policies.

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Let us all strive together to realise Gandhiji's dreams and usher in a *'Ram Raja'* where all are equal and there is no discrimination of any kind.

“Ramrajya of my dream ensures equal rights alike of prince and pauper”, observed the Mahatma.

I congratulate FICCI for this is timely initiative to undertake a series of initiatives to blaze forth the message of Mahatma. It was at your 4th AGM in 1931 that Gandhi ji said “*The Industry should regard themselves as trustees and servants of the poor*”.

I must also applaud the efforts of Aditya Birla group for espousing the trusteeship concept in the core values of your organization. Smt Rajashree Birla, the noble initiatives being held under your guidance are extremely appreciable. I am confident that today’s donation by your group for distribution of Charkhas will surely make a difference and impact the livelihoods at grass root level. I pray that India be blessed with the wisdom of Gandhi today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

Jai Hind!”

AKT/BK/MS/RK

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