

Vice President's Secretariat

Fundamental Rights and Duties go together, asserts Shri Venkaiah Naidu

Says dynamic nature of Indian Constitution enabled march of the nation

Urges political parties to keep nation above the creed

Addresses the joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in parliament on the occasion of Constitution Day

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Vice President of India and Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has stressed that Fundamental Rights of citizens are critically dependent on discharge of Fundamental Duties since both the rights and duties flow from each other. He spoke on the need for every citizen to take his duties towards the nation seriously at a function marking the 70th anniversary of adoption of the Indian Constitution in the Central Hall of Parliament today.

Noting that nation building can't be the responsibility of Governments alone, Shri Naidu stated, "While it is absolutely necessary to defend the Fundamental Rights relating to life, liberty, equality and freedom of expression etc., it is time that we, as citizens, take our duties towards the nation seriously. Entitlements come with duties and responsibilities as well. He further said that a proper environment for enjoying rights will be created if every citizen performs her duties. "Let us perform our duty to make India mighty", he appealed to the citizens.

Stating that a set of 11 Fundamental Duties have been listed in the Constitution of India, Shri Naidu urged every citizen to take responsibility for protecting the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the country; promoting harmony; defending and promoting the dignity of women; protection of environment; preserving the rich heritage and culture including promotion of Indian languages; inculcating a strong civic sense; protecting public property and abjuring violence; and striving for excellence.

To spread awareness among the citizens about their Fundamental Duties, the Vice President suggested a three point action plan including introduction of Fundamental Duties at an appropriate level in the curriculum, displaying the duties at all the educational institutions, offices and public spaces across the country and reaching out to the youth through appropriate campaigns.

Shri Naidu called for aiming at quality and excellence in all walks of public life including the debates in the legislatures including the Parliament.

Referring to the origin and evolution of the Constitution of India, Shri Naidu noted that the dynamism in-built into the Constitution enabled the country in its march towards consolidation of democracy and socio-economic development. The Vice President noted that the Indian democratic experience over the last 70 years has been fairly positive except for a dark patch during the Emergency.

He said, "It is a glowing testimony to our country's resilience, the strong framework of Parliamentary democracy, a robust electoral system and above all, the peoples' ability to orchestrate dissent through constitutional provisions that prevented us from slipping into dictatorship."

By placing the 'public' at the centre of our 'republic' the country emerged not only as the largest democracy but also as a glowing symbol of a vibrant, pluralistic culture with the flourishing parliamentary system, with the Constitution acting as the bulwark in protecting the rights of every society, Shri Naidu said.

Referring to the concern voiced by Dr. B. R Ambedkar, the Vice President urged the political parties to place the country above the creed so that the hard won independence is not jeopardised.

Following is the full text of the speech –

"Respected Rashtrapati ji, Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha Shri Om Birla ji, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, Union Ministers, Members of Parliament and other distinguished invitees, friends from the media!

At the outset, I whole heartedly extend my felicitations to the people of our country on this happy occasion of the 70th anniversary of adoption of the Constitution of India, an important milestone in the march of our country towards emerging as a 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic'. It was on this day 70 years ago that 'WE THE PEOPLE OF INDIA' gave to ourselves this Constitution by which 'the Union of India' came into being.

Our Constitution is not a static sculpture cast in stone but a living document, a document that was shaped by some of India's finest minds and sensitive hearts.

It is a document that we constantly engage with, trying constantly to shape our polity and governance in consonance with the spirit of this document.

The fact that we have amended this document 103 times shows how actively we ensure that its relevance is not diminished in a country that is transforming itself very rapidly.

On this occasion, I pay my tributes to millions of freedom fighters who gave their lives to make us free citizens of independent India, the members of the Constituent Assembly and in particular to Dr.B.R. Ambedkar for giving us the Constitution, the longest written constitution in the world.

It took almost three years to complete this formidable task. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. Ambedkar studied 60 constitutions and with his deep knowledge of our society and the requirements for building a modern India, he coordinated the drafting of this document in a masterly fashion. It was a document that was extensively debated. 2473 amendments were actually moved in the Constituent Assembly. It drew upon a number of features from Constitutions of different countries including that of USA, UK, the then USSR, Ireland, Canada,

France, Germany, Australia and Japan.

In his closing speech, while presenting the draft Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar expressed a sense of deep satisfaction at the work accomplished. At the same time, he was candid enough to express his fears as to what future has in store for India. He had said, "Will Indians place the country above their creed or will they place the creed above country? I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above our country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost forever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood."

On a positive note, he made three important suggestions to "maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact".

Dr. Ambedkar felt that "we must make our political democracy a social democracy as well."

Dear Hon'ble Members,

These observations are as relevant today as they were in 1949. They serve as guideposts for us to steer clear of debilitating pitfalls on our democratic journey.

The Indian democratic experience over the last seventy years has been, indeed, fairly positive except for a dark patch during the emergency when Constitution was subverted mainly because we didn't heed one of the warnings given by Dr. Ambedkar. But, it is a glowing testimony to our country's resilience, the strong framework of parliamentary democracy, a robust electoral system and above all, the people's ability to orchestrate dissent through constitutional provisions that prevented us from slipping into dictatorship.

Over the last seven decades, we should look back with legitimate pride that our country has not only adhered to its democratic constitution but has also made tremendous progress in breathing life into this document and deepening the democratic ethos.

We have progressively put the 'public' at the centre of our 'Republic' and emerged not only as the largest democracy but also as a country that continues to remain a glowing symbol of a vibrant, pluralistic culture with a flourishing parliamentary system and with the Constitution acting as the bulwark in protecting the rights of a free society.

We have not only focused on fundamental rights and are progressively shaping our policies and programmes to create an inclusive, developed India in consonance with the Preamble of the Constitution but we are bringing about a transformation in governance.

It is truly a paradigm shift in which people are no longer seen as passive recipients or 'beneficiaries' but are becoming active change agents.

Rights and responsibilities are now being seen as two sides of the same coin.

The fundamental duties, however, need greater emphasis. While speaking about the importance of Fundamental Duties, the Supreme Court has said that they are as important as Fundamental Rights (AIIMS Students Union Vs AIIMS, 2001). The court has also held that these duties are applicable to the State as well.

Unless each one of us performs one's duty, the rights of others cannot be realized.

If we discharge our duties with dedication and commitment to the national objectives and constitutional values, the country will move faster on the development trajectory and will become a more mature democracy. That is why Hon'ble Prime Minister has given us the clarion call of 'reform, perform and transform'.

Our goal is to transform our nation. We should ensure that our performance is among the best in the world. We should be also "thinking" individuals and see how we can "reform" existing practices and systems.

Innovation should be ingrained in our perspectives on work and life.

Finally, we have to be forward looking and aim at "transformation" of our country in all spheres.

We are at that crucial cusp in our history where we are steadily growing into a major world economy.

We are on a transformatory path of inclusive development building on our strengths of demography, democracy and demand as well as a trained workforce and a wide diaspora network.

We are making our democracy work and are constantly trying to ensure that the fruits reach everyone, especially the ones who are left out of the growth story.

It is time for us to focus on our rich human resource.

It is time to remind ourselves of the duties enshrined in the Constitution.

It is time to harness the latent talent of each citizen by taking a pledge to be a part of this exciting journey ahead, to ensure that we do our duty and do it well, as Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the ancient Indian text of Bhagavad Gita.

Dear Hon'ble Members,

While it is absolutely necessary to defend the Fundamental Rights relating to life, liberty equality and freedom of expression etc., it is time that we, as citizens, take our duties towards the nation seriously. Entitlements come with duties and responsibilities as well.

Nation building can't be the responsibility of governments alone. Citizens have to play an equally important role. Our Constitution enlisted a set of eleven 'Fundamental Duties of the Citizens' toward the nation.

Of the fundamental duties, let me highlight the ones I feel are quite important.

The first is to protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of our country. No creed or credo should cloud our vision. No other consideration except national unity and integrity should weigh in our mind.

Related to this is the duty to promote harmony transcending religions, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities.

Second is the duty to 'renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women'. In a country that has traditionally given a pride of place to women, there has been an unfortunate tendency to discriminate against women and in isolated cases, even resort to abuse and violent actions.

The third is to protect the natural environment so essential for our existence and improved quality of life.

The fourth is the duty to preserve the rich heritage and culture along with the languages and literature that we have inherited. We must pay special attention to develop all Indian languages. We have to protect nature and culture if we want a bright future.

The fifth is the duty to inculcate a strong civic sense and ensure cleanliness and orderly conduct, protect public property and abjure violence.

The sixth is to “strive for excellence”. Let us not settle for mediocrity. Let quality consciousness pervade in all that we do. In the way we conduct our business, in the way we deliver public services, in the way we teach, in the way we run our institutions, in the way we debate in the legislatures and the Parliament, we should not compromise on quality. Excellence should be a way of life.

On this occasion, let us resolve to spread awareness among the citizens of our country about their Fundamental Duties. As an instrument of promoting this awareness, I suggest that Fundamental Duties be included in the curriculum at an appropriate level, the list of Fundamental Duties should be displayed at all the educational institutions, offices and public places across the country; and we must reach out to the youth through appropriate campaigns.

The Constitution has created three organs of the State, namely, the Legislature, the Judiciary and the Executive with well defined jurisdiction. Let every organ work to it's mandate without encroaching on that of the other. But for occasional frictions, the constitutional scheme has so far worked well. We should look for ways to work together even more effectively.

We are passing through exciting times relating to our freedom, parliamentary democracy and becoming a Republic. The historic 250th session of Rajya Sabha is in progress when we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of adoption of the Constitution. We are also celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who converted our freedom struggle into a mass movement leading to our freedom. Soon, we are going to celebrate the 75th anniversary of our Independence.

I am grateful to Rashtrapati ji for releasing a coin and a postal stamp on the occasion of the landmark 250th session of Rajya Sabha and also for receiving the first copy of the commemorative volume. I wish to thank the Ministry of Finance and Department of Posts, M/o Communications.

On this momentous occasion, I pay my respectful homage to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar ji, the illustrious son of our great land who left such an indelible mark on the history of India with his vast erudition and extraordinary vision.

On this happy occasion, let us resolve to strive for realizing the objectives enshrined in the Constitution of India by adhering to the letter and spirit of methods provided there in. Let us strive for excellence in the discharge of our duties. We the people have to make up our mind to serve the nation and shape it the way we wish to ideally see it.

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Jai Hind!”

VRRK/MS/MSY/RK

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