

**Speech by**



**Hon'ble Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu**

Vice President of India

and

President of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)

after giving away

**Swarajya Awards**

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"I am delighted to participate in this event and present awards to the deserving recipients from different walks of life. Apart from recognizing the talent and merit of the winners, these types of awards provide inspiration to others. As a matter of fact, recognizing talent and merit in an individual or an organization has been part of India's culture and traditions.

Of course, it is needless to say that there is no dearth of talent among Indians. There is an abundance of talent, which has to be encouraged, promoted and duly recognized in all walks of life.

As you all are aware, India in ancient times controlled more than one-third of global wealth and about two centuries ago, the country's GDP was 27 per cent of the world GDP. India was known as 'Vishwaguru' and savants and knowledge-seekers from all over the world used to come here to study at Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila, Pushpagiri and Valabhi universities.

Here, I would like recall a few observations. Well-known American historian, Will Durant had this to say about India: "India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages: she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all".

American writer and humorist, Mark Twain said: "India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only."

Iconic scientist, Albert Einstein said "We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made".

History shows that India was never an aggressor and always was the victim of invasions. Yet, India and its peace-loving people always believed in "Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavanthu" reflecting the age-old cultural ethos of this country. Every one of us must feel proud of having inherited such a glorious and pacifist past. The time has now come for us to build a New India, which shall again take its rightful place in the comity of nations.

In fact, the Vedas speak of equality, universal peace, tolerance, non-violence, welfare and brotherhood. There is nobody superior or inferior, according to the Vedas. Answers for many problems facing the world can be found in the Vedas, which provide us with guidance needed to achieve moral, economic, social and political development.

Friends, India is set to become the fastest growing large economy again. Only the other day, the UN's World Economic Situation Report projected India's GDP to grow at 7.2 per cent in 2018 and 7.4 per cent in 2019. It said that the outlook for India remained largely positive, underpinned by robust private consumption and public investment as also due to the ongoing structural reforms.

In the coming years, the economy is expected to improve further as a result of various reforms and India is projected to become the third largest economy in the world by 2028. However, every reform must have a human face and the fruits of development must reach all sections, particularly the poorest of the poor. Unless, the growth is inclusive and there is equitable distribution of wealth, development will have no meaning. Various indicators relating to the Human Development Index have to improve as the country's economy reaches newer heights. The twin evils of corruption and black money have to be completely eliminated to ensure that progress is not pulled back by these evils.

I would also like to emphasize the need for greater focus on agriculture and ensure that the income of our farmers' gets doubled in the coming years. Unless the farmer is assured of proper remuneration and encouraged to diversify crop cultivation, among others, the agriculture sector will face problems. Concerted and complementary efforts have to be made by all stakeholders to prevent any kind of distress to farmers.

I would also like to stress upon the need for women's empowerment. The time has come for the country to move forward by providing adequate representation to women in Parliament and legislatures. There should not be any gender discrimination. In fact, it should be remembered that women used to enjoy equal status during Vedic times.

Friends, there is also a need for undertaking electoral reforms such as conducting simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and the Assemblies. Such a measure would not only reduce the expenditure but would also put an end to the frequent spectacle of administration coming to a grinding halt as soon as the model code of conduct comes into effect. The frequency of elections will naturally affect development and the best option would be to switch over to simultaneous elections.

The effective functioning of Parliament and Legislatures is extremely important for strengthening the foundations of democracy in the country. Unfortunately, the Parliament and State Legislatures are increasingly facing disruptions and unable to perform their functions in an optimum manner. This unhealthy trend of paralyzing Parliament and Assemblies must stop as it is vital in a democracy for people's representatives to discuss threadbare important issues affecting the people and find solutions to them. Various political parties must ponder over this issue and ensure that their members act in conformity with the rules and procedures and enhance the prestige of the legislative bodies.

I would like to recall that in the resolution adopted at the Special Session of Parliament on the occasion of Golden Jubilee of the country's Independence, the MPs had solemnly affirmed their commitment to maintaining the inviolability of the Question Hour, refraining from transgressing into the official areas of the House, or from shouting of slogans and invariably desisting from any efforts at interruption with the address of the President.

All Members of Parliament, MLAs, MLCs and other public representatives must set high standards of behavior and act as role models to others.

JAI HIND!

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