

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA FOR THE RELEASE OF
“SELECTED SPEECHES OF M. VENKAIAH NAIDU - VICE
PRESIDENT OF INDIA”**

I am happy to release the First Volume of the Selected Speeches of Shri Venkaiah Naidu Ji, the Honorable Vice President of India. I have had a long association with Shri Naidu, for more than 2 decades when he was first elected to Rajya Sabha in April 1998.

2. An accomplished orator, Shri Naidu’s speeches reflect the richness of his experience in public affairs, his vision and aspirations and his expectations and hopes for the future of India. The 92 speeches compiled in this book, carefully selected from over 400 speeches, cover a wide range of issues from Education to Administration to National Security to Agriculture. They are an embodiment of the cultural ethos and the constitutional values that form the foundations of this Nation.

3. While going through the compilation of Shri Naidu's speeches, I realised that his vision of **Governance** in new India is built on the twin pillars of Inclusion and Sustainability. To my mind, a society that promotes a high degree of social inclusion is one in which members participate meaningfully and actively, have varied opportunities for collective experiences, enjoy freedom and equality, share social experiences and attain fundamental well-being.

4. To realize the goals of inclusive growth, Governments in our country need to direct governance efforts towards a holistic policy and comprehensive and focused strategy of economic and social inclusion. Poverty and unemployment continue to be the central challenges confronting our policymakers. The marginal farmers, landless labourers, and casual workers are the worst sufferers of these deprivations.

5. The Vice President in his address on the occasion of International Day of Democracy on 15th September, 2017 in New Delhi said and I quote, "***The ultimate purpose of***

democratic governance is social democracy, to ensure inclusive development, and improvement in the quality of life of all citizens; especially those who are the poorest of the poor and those who have been left out of the democratic processes.”

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6. Starting his political career as a Member of Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh in 1978, Shri Venkaiah Naidu has thereafter held the portfolios of Rural Development, Urban Development, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary affairs. He is now the Vice-President of India and sits at the steering wheel of one of our greatest institutions as the Chairman of Rajya Sabha.

7. Although he was always across the aisle for me in the Parliament, I have been an admirer of his thoughts and words. They reflect his pride at the syncretic nature of our rich traditional values and ethos. He envisions the Parliament as a citadel of democracy that is transparent in

its actions, responsive to the needs of the people, dedicated to the cause of inclusive development and dignified in its deliberations and debates which are inspired by the highest traditions of truth and righteousness.

Dear Friends,

8. Our ancient civilizational values related to governance have always been centered around ***Antyodaya*** and ***Sarvodaya*** under the overarching philosophy of ***Sarve Sukhinah Bhavantu***. In modern times, these principles of good governance and inclusive growth find expression in the Fundamental Rights and more so in the Directive Principles of State Policy in our Constitution. The guidance and directions of the rulers were based on the Philosophy of “***Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaye***”, as delineated in the Rig Veda. Our 70 years old Constitution has not only retained its significance but has become even more relevant today.

9. The Constitution that we gave to ourselves was drafted by the sovereign Constituent Assembly of India, representing the will of its people. The constitution guided us – the legislators, institutions and the citizens to forge a nation that secures for all its citizens, **“Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.”** These goals were to be achieved through a parliamentary system of government that we chose for ourselves after much deliberation and debate in the assembly. Our parliamentary system of government was not a corollary to the Westminster system but was a natural extension of the self governing institutions and deliberative representative bodies we had since the Vedic times.

10. Our indigenous experience with representative government started in the Republic (Gan Rajya) of Lichhavi, Kapilvastu, Pava, Kushinara, Ramagrama, Sunsamagiri, Piphali, Suputa, Mithila and Kollanga in the 6th Century BC and continued up till 400 AD in various parts of the country. The Constituent Assembly, the first representative body of the people of India, the members of

which were chosen through indirect election by the members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies commenced its momentous task on 9 December 1946.

11. The key factors that led to the adoption of the parliamentary system of government in India were – representation of diverse interest groups and the familiarity of the Indian polity with the working of the British system of government. To imbibe these values of representation and act as true representatives of the constituents, one needs to continually enhance the quality of debates in the parliament and respect the laws and rules of the legislatures.

12. India is a diverse nation consisting of various groups of people from different classes, castes, religions, and cultures; holding varying opinions. The Parliament stands for the will and aspirations of the people which are concretized through the medium of discussion and deliberation. However, over the years I have noticed, with grave concern, a decline in the culture of this very debate that keeps the spirit of Democracy alive. In his address on

Importance of Legislatures organized by PRS Legislative Research in New Delhi on 11TH December, 2017, the Vice President said and I quote *“I do share the concern about the quality of the debates and disruption of proceedings. Barring a few parliamentarians, the overall quality of debates has seen a definite downward trend in the last few decades. The quality of interventions and debates can be substantially enhanced with adequate homework and preparation by the Members of Parliament.”* (Unquote)

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13. The Parliament of India is the **fountain-head of governance**. The function of the Parliament is to make laws, debate, deliberate and decide on policies. All executive decisions are subject to scrutiny by the Parliament. However, a very unfortunate trend of undermining the very purpose of Parliament has evolved during the past decade or so. Resorting to disruption as an established Parliamentary practice and defining it as a constructive deliberative method has led to Parliamentary

subversion. I am in agreement with Shri Naidu, when he says, and I quote - ***“Competitive and confrontational politics are understood to be one of the reasons for these disruptions. This is not in the interest of the parliamentary democracy.”***

14. The rise in identity based politics during the last three decades has diluted the very representative aspect of the Parliament. An electorate divided on caste and community lines throws up a polarised mandate and rather than pursuing a national agenda, the Parliament ends up pursuing sectarian interests. A strong message that I gather from his speeches is that parliamentarians belonging to different political parties might very well be rivals but never enemies. The ideas and ideologies might be different but the allegiance is the same, to the voter, the common man.

15. I would also like to draw attention of all concerned towards some other shortcomings that have crept in over time in our Parliamentary system. Disproportionately large size of the electorate vis-à-vis the number of public

representatives is a major concern. There is a need to enhance the number of seats in the Parliament in proportion to the population to make the most important democratic institution of the country truly representative. There is inadequate representation of women in Parliament and the Assemblies. Reserving 33% of seats for women is an idea that has to be implemented at the earliest. It is already late by 2 decades. Deliberate weakening of Parliamentary oversight by the executive is another major concern area.

16. Despite the challenges and obstacles faced by the Parliamentary system in India, I would like to emphasize that it has served the country well. As Shri Naidu rightly said in his address on Revitalizing Parliamentary Democracy in Kolkata held on 30th December, 2017 and I quote ***“India’s Parliamentary system has matured over the years and stood the test of time”***. (Unquote)(Pg 26) There is a need to move from ***‘Swarajya’*** to ***‘Surajya’***. A clean, competent, people-friendly, proactive administrative leadership is the need of the hour. There is

also a need to build a culture of evaluation and constant learning in our governance systems and focus upon impact and outcomes.

17. I believe that in today's era, digital as well as physical media can be utilised as tool for empowerment of people for social mobilisation, building partnerships, catalysing individual and collective actions for betterment of life, promoting peace and harmony and supporting national reconstruction. I applaud the firm and unrelenting stand taken by the Vice President against sensationalism, paid news and fake news. He asks media to be responsible, professional, empathetic and truthful.

18. India is on the verge of a transformation. As the global economy slows down, India is surging ahead with great confidence and full faith in the capacity of its people to excel. This book sends out a message to the people.

The message is that of unity.

It tells us unequivocally that there are more things that unite us as a nation than those that divide us. We owe it to

our history and to our posterity to seize the moment and write a new story of a resurgent India. Above all we need to empower our people. And I believe that this book has the capacity to inspire its readers.

19. Shri Naidu's energy and enthusiasm are indeed infectious. He speaks from the heart which makes him a much loved and admired orator. Lacing his speeches with rhymes and humour, he makes sure that his speeches are not just thought provoking but also memorable. He stands tall among India's leaders serving as a great example of dedication and hard work to the youth of the country. He is indeed an example worthy of emulation.

20. I congratulate Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and Publications Division, for bringing this book out with a beautiful layout and design. I am convinced that it prove to be an inspiring read for its readers. I also take this opportunity to mention the World Class 13 Publications that the Publications Division brought about on various facets of Rashtrapati Bhavan during my term as the President of India. I would like to compliment the

Publications Division and its Director General, Smt. Sadhna Raut for their professional and *avant garde* work.

I congratulate Venkaiah Ji and wish him good health and many more years in public life.

Thank You

Jai Hind!