

PM's address at joint session of Parliament on 70th Constitution Day – 26 November, 2019



Your Excellency the President, Hon'ble Vice President, Hon'ble Speaker Sir, Shri Prahlada Ji and all the respected public representatives.

There are some occasions that strengthen our relationship with the past and motivate us to work for the future. Today, 26 November, is a historic day. 70 years ago we duly adopted the Constitution with a new look; but at the same time, 26 November hurts as on this day terrorists had tried to shatter India's great traditions, thousands of years of cultural heritage, the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and this great tradition of living in Mumbai. I salute all those departed souls today. Seven decades ago, in the same central hall, there was an echo of sacred voices and every article of the Constitution was discussed in detail. Arguments poured in; facts poured in; ideas were discussed; beliefs were discussed; dreams were discussed, resolutions were discussed. In a way, this House, this place was the Mahakumbh of knowledge where a great effort was put to translate the dreams of every corner of India into words. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Bhimrao Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Nehru, Acharya Sukrani ji, Maulana Azad, Purushottam Das Tandon, Sucheta Kripalani, Hansa Mehta, LD Krishnaswamy Iyer, N.K.

Gopaldaswamy Ayyangar, John Matthai -there are countless such personalities who have given us this great legacy in our hands by making direct and indirect contributions. On this occasion today, I commemorate all those great personalities and pay my respectful homage to them.

Today, I would like to mention all the things that Babasaheb Ambedkar had said in his last speech on 25 November 1949, a day before the adoption of the Constitution. Babasaheb reminded the country that India was first liberated in 1947 or became a Republic on 26 January 1950; but this was not the case. India was free even before and we had many Republics here. Expressing his agony he further said that we had lost freedom in the past due to our own mistakes and had also lost the Republic character due to the same reason. In such a situation, Baba Saheb had warned the country that although we had got independence, we had also become a Republic, but could we sustain it? Could we learn from the past? If Baba Saheb had been here today, no one would have been happier than him because India has not only answered his questions over the years but has also made the independence and democracy more enriched and empowered. So on this occasion today I would like to commemorate and pay my respects to all the members of the executive, judiciary and legislature who have preserved the spirit of the Constitution intact in the last seven decades. I especially bow down to 130 crore Indians who never let the faith in India's democracy diminish. Our Constitution has always been considered as a holy book and a guiding light.

The 70 years of the constitution have brought a mixed sense of joy, excellence and conclusion to us. This joy is for the fact that the spirit of the Constitution has been steadfast and unshakable. Even if there were such efforts ever, the countrymen have foiled those attempts together. The constitution has not been allowed to be harmed ever. We have definitely registered the excellence due to the strength of our Constitution and we have been able to move towards Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat. We have brought several reforms within the ambit of the Constitution. And the conclusion is that the Constitution is the one and only way for the progress of this huge and diverse India, for the new future, for the New India. This is the only way the spirit of the constitution is intact. Our Constitution is the greatest and the most sacred text for us. It is such a book that encompasses our life, our society, our traditions, our beliefs, our behavior and our ethos! There are solutions to many challenges as well. Our Constitution is so broad because it has kept its

windows open for outside light. And moreover, the light inside has also been given an opportunity to ignite more brightly.

Today, on this occasion, I would repeat one thing that I had said from the ramparts of the Red Fort in 2014. If I want to describe the Constitution in two simple words, then it will be – Dignity for Indians and Unity for India. These two mantras have been fulfilled by our Constitution, keeping the citizens' dignity supreme and the unity and integrity of the whole of India intact. Our Constitution is the ultimate example of global democracy. It not only tells us about our rights but also makes us aware of our duties. In a way, our Constitution is the most secular in the world. There is no limit to what we have to do, how big we can dream and where we want to reach. The Constitution itself talks about rights and the Constitution itself includes the expectation of following the duties. Are we, as a person, as a family, as a society, as serious about our duties as our Constitution, our country and our countrymen expect from us. As Rajendra Babu ji has said that what is not written in the Constitution, we have to establish it by convention and this is also the specialty of India. In the past decades, we emphasized upon our rights and that was necessary and imperative because such systems had been made in the society due to which a large section was denied their rights. Without introducing rights, it was not possible to make this large class realize the importance of equality and justice. But today, the need of the hour is that we as citizens should follow our duties and responsibilities besides enjoying our rights; because without fulfilling our obligation, we cannot protect our rights.

There is an unbreakable relationship between rights and duties and this relationship was very categorically explained by Mahatma Gandhi. Today, when the country is celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Pujya Bapu, mentioning him becomes very relevant. He used to say that right is duty well performed. He had written it somewhere. I have learned from my illiterate but sensible mother that all rights come from your duties performed by you with true integrity and dedication. In the early decades of the last century, when the whole world was talking about rights, Gandhiji went a step ahead and had said – let us talk about the duties of citizens. In 1947, Dr. Julian Huxley, Director General of UNESCO, had written a letter to 60 stalwarts, and had asked for their guidance. He had asked in the letter as to what would be the basis for the world charter of human rights. And in this, he had sought opinion from the great personalities of the world, and had also asked Mahatma Gandhi. But the idea of Mahatma Gandhi was somewhat different from others in the world. Mahatma ji had said that we can earn the rights of

our lives only when we fully perform our duties as citizens. That is, in a way, the rights can be protected by performing duties itself. It was advocated by Mahatma Gandhi at that time. When we talk of obligation and duties, these are very common responsibilities which we as a nation have to fulfill and the resolutions are proven by doing so. And we also have to pay very clear attention to the fact that sometimes we consider service as duty. Service, values and traditions are very important for every society. But duty is something more than service and sometimes it does not get our attention. If you help someone on the road who needs it is a sort of service. This spirit of service makes any society and humanity very strong. But the duty is slightly different. It is a good thing to help someone on the road. But if I have followed the traffic rules and have ensured that no one ever has any problem, it is my duty to be a part of such a system. If you ask a question to yourself – whatever I am doing, will my country be strengthened by it or not? As a family member we do everything that increases the strength of our family. In the same way, as citizens, we should do the same in order to strengthen our country and make our nation powerful.

When a citizen sends his child to school, the parents do their duty; but if those parents consciously urge their child to learn the mother tongue, then they are also performing their duty as a citizen. They perform their duty of service to the nation. And so if a person does small things on his part like saving every drop of water, he also performs his civic duty. If one goes and completes the vaccination, no one has to remind him of vaccination then he performs his duty. If he goes to vote without the need of someone convincing him, then he performs his duty. If he pays his tax on time, he performs his duty. There are many such responsibilities. If as a citizen we develop those as a natural system and as a sacrament, then we can easily take our country forward. Unless these questions become paramount in the consciousness of every citizen of our country, our civic duty will continue to be weak and might harm someone else's rights in some form. Hence, we also have an obligation to focus on our duties in view of protecting others' rights. And as public representatives we have more responsibilities. Besides strengthening constitutional values, we have to present ourselves as an ideal. It becomes our responsibility. And we have to fulfil this duty in order to bring a meaningful change in the society. We should focus on 'duties' in every programme, and every discussion. We should not forget to talk about duties while communicating with the public. Our Constitution begins with 'we the people of India'. We the people of India are India's strength. We are its inspiration and we are its purpose.

'I am for the society; I am for the Nation' – this expression of duty is the source of our inspiration. I call upon all of you to fulfil the duties as responsible citizens of India with this resolution. Come and let us take our Republic towards a new culture wherein we are engaged in duties. Let us all become the new citizens and noble citizens of the country. I hope that the Constitution Day upholds the ideals of our Constitution, strengthens our commitment to contribute towards nation building and gives us the strength to fulfil the dream that our Constitution makers had dreamed of. And this is the sacred place where this brainstorming had taken place, the echo of which is still reverberating. This echo will definitely bless us, inspire us, and give us strength. This echo will definitely give us a direction. With this feeling, I once again salute the revered Baba Saheb Ambedkar on the holy occasion of Constitution Day today, bow down to the framers of the Constitution and convey my best wishes to the countrymen.

Thank you!