



Justice has and must continue to remain first principle of social and political Institutions: Vice President Addresses Human Rights Day

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Justice has and must continue to remain the first principle of social and political institutions. He was addressing the Human Rights Day, here today. The Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission, Shri Justice H.L. Dattu and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that the Human Rights Day observed on 10 December every year commemorates the day on which, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He further said that India has been unequivocal in its commitment to the preservation and protection of human rights globally as well as within the country. It is a signatory to several of the core international human rights and International Labour Organizations conventions, he added.

The Vice President said that our commitment for human rights is part of our culture from time immemorial it always respected others Human Rights. We have a noble saying called "Sarve Janah Sukhino Bhavantu,"; we believe in the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - the entire Universe is one Family", he added.

The Vice President said that civil rights, Minority rights and others are guaranteed in India not just because they are in the constitution, they are guaranteed because they are part of our DNA. "Secularism which got included in the constitution at a later stage is ingrained in our DNA from the beginning," India as a country has no history of aggression of any kind and we tried to assimilate all the people who have come here, he added.

The Vice President said that ballot is powerful than bullet and power cannot be gained with barrel of gun. You have no right to kill others and get protected under Human Rights, he questioned.

The Vice President said that women empowerment and gender equality are important issues for our democracy as the position of women is still precarious, especially in rural areas. He further said that gender inequality is among the key social disparities that keeps large numbers of women on the margin of 'new India'. Poor literacy rates and discrimination in education against the girl child have contributed to enhancing the vulnerability of women in society, opined. He expressed his happiness that programmes like 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao' are being taken up responding to these challenges.

The Vice President said that Indian democracy has also been confronted with terrorism and extremist violence both of which tend to trample upon the right to life and liberty of individuals. Any violence and senseless killings are the worst forms of violation of human rights and need to be dealt with accordingly, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am happy to be with all of you this evening for celebrating the Human Rights Day. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings without discrimination. *Human Rights Day*, observed on 10 December every year commemorates the day on which, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). This has been a guiding document to guarantee the rights of every individual without discrimination and one that would serve as a valuable ally to the UN Charter in ensuring global peace and security.

2. The human rights discourse has assumed great importance especially in the last few decades, with human rights being viewed by governments and civil society alike, as indispensable to the realization of development goals, including the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. The arena of human rights and social justice has gradually expanded over the decades to include among others, the right to healthcare, education, food, forest rights for indigenous communities as well as policy-level interventions in the form of affirmative action for the historically marginalized and discriminated. Further, issues of gender, youth, the differently-abled, and the elderly are also recognized as important human right concerns today.
4. India has been unequivocal in its commitment to the preservation and protection of human rights globally as well as within the country. It is a signatory to several of the core international human rights and International Labour Organizations (ILO) conventions.

Our commitment for human rights is part of our culture, from time immemorial it always respected others Human Rights. We have a noble saying called "Sarve Janah Sukhino Bhavantu," We believe in the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam- The entire Universe is one Family".

Civil rights, Minority rights and others are guaranteed in India not just because they are in the constitution, they are guaranteed because they are part of our DNA.

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5. In addition to being a signatory to these important human rights conventions, our country's Constitution has given a robust human rights protection framework. An independent judiciary, free media and an active civil society and a number of independent human right bodies, such as, the National Human Rights Commission provide a vigorous and effective network for human rights protection and an effective system of checks

and balances.

6. The establishment of urban and rural local self-government, notably the three-tier Panchayati Raj System is also a crucial component of this human rights protection framework, for it has taken development, human rights, and social-economic welfare down to the very grassroot level. Local self-governance in India has opened up new vistas in women's empowerment and the participation of historically marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in local governance/public affairs, thus, bolstering our shared vision for the realization of human rights and human empowerment.

Women constitute 33% in majority of local bodies, and 50% in many of the state. I believe in the coming days we will have considerable representation even in the legislature and also in Parliament.

7. It was in keeping with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and the endorsement by the General Assembly of the United Nations through its Resolution of 20 December 1993, that countries across the world established their respective National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). The National Human Rights Commission of India was also instituted by the Parliament of India with a view to realize the cherished goal of equal rights and life opportunities for all people.
8. Since its inception in 1993, the NHRC, India has played a pivotal role in the enforcement of the fundamental rights outlined in our Constitution and those contained in key international human rights instruments to which India is a party. In addition, it has done much by way of spreading human rights awareness and sensitization among governments and members of civil society on the importance of safeguarding human rights.

We have retired Chief Justice of India as the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, that itself shows our commitment to Human Rights.

9. However, despite this formidable human rights protection framework and the significant strides we have made since our independence, there are several human rights challenges that continue to confront us as a nation.
10. **Poverty** is perhaps the biggest affront to human dignity and fulfillment and among the major challenges to realizing a truly democratic India. Rapid strides have been made since independence but a sizeable proportion of India's population lives below the poverty line.

We are all engaged in eradicating poverty. We have chosen the path of inclusive growth that is including the people in the developmental agenda of the nation. Welfare measures taken by the government such as Jandhan, Mudra and others are moving in a direction to eradicate poverty.

11. In this regard, India is committed to implement **Agenda 2030** on the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), which are rooted in a human rights approach towards ending poverty and other forms of discrimination and inequity. The government is taking proactive measures for ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests.
12. India has taken steps to make the **right to education** a cardinal principle of state policy. Universal access to education and creating a literate world has been the focus of governments. However, there are challenges in terms of illiteracy and quality of schooling. Literacy is crucial as a human right and also for successful functioning of democracy and socio-economic development of the country. Although according to 2011 Census, the literacy rate has risen to 74.04 per cent, the female literacy rate stands at 65.46 per cent. I believe that democracy can effectively flourish only when people know their rights and privileges and also their duties and responsibilities.
13. **Women empowerment and gender equality** are important issues for our democracy as the position of women is still precarious, especially in rural areas, despite the fact that women, according to the 2011 census, comprise 58.7 crore (48.5%) of the country's total population. Gender inequality is among the key social disparities that keeps large numbers of women on the margin of 'new India'. Poor literacy rates and discrimination in education against the girl child have contributed to enhancing the vulnerability of women in society. There has been some improvement in the last 10 years in the sex ratio but challenges of female feticide and pre-natal sex selection persist. I am happy that programmes like 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao' are being taken up responding to these challenges.
14. **The right to shelter** is another right that impacts the quality of life. India has embarked on a number of programs that seek to make this a reality.
15. The challenges of **caste and communalism** are major challenges to Indian democracy which serve to weaken the stability of the country with the potential to disrupt peaceful co-existence in our multi-religious and multi-cultural society.

These challenges are sometimes being exploited for personal, political and sectarian gains and that is a big challenge to us.

16. Indian democracy has also been confronted with **terrorism** and **extremist violence** both of which tend to trample upon the right to life and liberty of individuals. Any violence and senseless killings are the worst forms of violation of human rights and need to be dealt with accordingly.

We as a nation believe in peaceful co-existence, but unfortunately some people take terror as a state policy. Terror has no religion, but unfortunately some people are given a communal colour and using it as protection. "Terror is the enemy of Humanity"

I hope the United Nation Security Council completes the consultation at the earliest, and come to conclusion to take firm action against terror.

17. **Corruption** poses a serious development challenge and is a violator of people's rights. In the political realm, it undermines democracy and good governance by subverting formal processes.
18. **'Justice'** has and must continue to remain the first principle of social and political institutions. The notion of justice focuses on a sense of fairness and protection of rights guaranteed under various laws of the land. However, the speed and alacrity with which justice is done is important. Human rights of all law abiding citizens must be protected with timely objective dispensation of justice.
19. Today's Human Rights Day marks an importance milestone for not only India, but the world at large. The true test of 'good governance' is the degree to which a State delivers on the promise of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Thus, the key benchmark for judging effective governance is whether or not public institutions are effectively guaranteeing rights such as right to health, housing, food, education, and justice, besides ensuring effective safety in the country. This is the ideal world view we have inherited from ancient sages who said 'Sarve Janaah Sukhino Bhavantu' and also from the founding fathers who advocated the Antyodaya approach.
20. Our **country's cultural ethos** has human rights as the underlying principle. **It recognizes and respects human rights of all human beings. Living together without aggression and learning from others around the world** has been our world view. Ours is a land that had said at least an million years ago: "aa no bhadrah krathavo yanthu vishwathaha" Let noble thoughts come to us from all over the world.
21. It is heartening to note that the NHRC, India on its part has been striving to protect and promote the constitutional rights of the common citizens, and has gradually expanded its scope of activity to embrace newer human right challenges and concerns with a view to promote a culture of human rights in the country.
22. On this momentous occasion, therefore, let us re-dedicate ourselves to our shared mission as Indian citizens to uphold the dignity and rights of all people of the country and infuse our national consciousness with the spirit of the greatest respect for all human life and our natural environment.

THANK YOU, JAI HIND!"

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