



India can't be developed if there are glaring inequalities based on caste, creed, religion and sex: Vice President Releases the Book 'Social Exclusion and Justice in India'

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that we cannot create a developed India if there are glaring inequalities based on caste, creed, religion and sex. He was addressing the gathering after releasing the Book "Social Exclusion and Justice in India", authored by Shri P.S. Krishnan, here today. The Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Thaawar Chand Gehlot and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that over the last seven decades, the author has been a relentless champion of social justice for deprived social classes and has delved deep into roots of discrimination in Indian society. He further said that the book is a testimony to his grasp and in depth knowledge of the issues of the deprived social classes, the Dalits, the Adivasis and the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes, and practical and effective ways of resolving them, based on his long experience in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and in the country as a whole.

The Vice President said that the author has traced the dialogues between the founding fathers of our Constitution, especially Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar, and traced the confluence of diverse thoughts of these two great men in the final version of India's Constitution. He further said that Dr. Ambedkar joining the first Cabinet of independent India as Minister of Law and thereafter as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly were, as the author points out, decisive steps that forged a national convergence on social justice and inclusion.

The Vice President said that the book is not only a piece of analytical research and synthesis but also a book which provides practical insights into how the Constitutional provisions have been translated into legislations and other programmatic interventions. Only through the empowerment of the Dalits and Adivasis and also the More, Most and Extremely Backward castes of the SEBCs our nation can progress optimally, he added.

The Vice President said that the author examined the implementation of various constitutional provisions related to the identification of SCs, STs and Socially and Educationally Backward classes, political reservation, reservation in public employment and education, reservation in promotion, prohibition of bonded labour and the unique provision for development of STs. He further said that he fully endorse the author's view that these articles in the constitution must be sincerely and holistically implemented. There is no better tribute we can pay to the founding fathers than to breathe life into these articles which are an eloquent expression of a world view that has social inclusion and social justice as the cardinal overarching principles, he added.

The Vice President said that we have taken the solemn resolve to deepen our democracy by caring for those who have been left out of the democratic process and SabkaSath, SabkaVikas has become our national goal. He further said that Antyodaya is taken as the non-negotiable approach. However, we have unpleasant realities to confront and that is the biggest challenge before us today, he added.

The Vice President said that we knew what we should do but are not doing it and we are not getting our act together. He further said that all of us to take note of this "action deficit". There should be a national debate on sub-categorisation of Social groups to reach the un-reached, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely happy to launch Shri P.S. Krishnan's scholarly work entitled "Social Exclusion and Justice in India", by Routledge Publication.

I have known Shri P.S. Krishnan for a very long time and have been an admirer of his tremendous commitment to the cause of social justice and inclusion. Over the last seven decades, he has been a relentless champion of social justice for deprived social classes and has delved deep into roots of discrimination in Indian society.

He has not only produced many well researched erudite publications but also contributed significantly to India's policy making and legislative processes and executive action.

This book is yet another of his invaluable contributions to the national discourse on social exclusion and justice. It is a testimony to his grasp and in depth knowledge of the issues of the deprived social classes, the Dalits, the Adivasis and the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes, and practical and effective ways of resolving them, based on his long experience in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and in the country as a whole.

This volume closely examines the evolution of the caste system and its socio-economic ramifications and related concepts such as untouchability, atrocities, reservation in jobs, educational institutions and legislatures.

The author very rightly observes that "Since caste was the instrument of deprivation/exclusion, caste automatically became the instrument of mobilization. It was also the natural result of the unnatural but long and deeply entrenched institution of the caste system." The shape of this mobilization took different forms in different parts of the country in the 19th and the 20th Centuries. Led by Mahatma Phule, Sri Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Periyar E.V. Ramasamy with valuable support and contributions from Chhatrapati Shahu of Kolhapur, Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad of Baroda these movements served to heighten the consciousness about the pernicious social evils that were stubbornly persisting.

The author has traced the dialogues between the founding fathers of our Constitution, especially Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar, and traced the confluence of diverse thoughts of these two great men in the final version of India's Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar joining the first Cabinet of independent India as Minister of Law and thereafter as the chairman of the drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly were, as the author points out, decisive steps that forged a national convergence on social justice and inclusion.

A reading of the chapter on a comparison of our Constitution with the American Constitution with respect to the concepts of "social justice" and "affirmative action" fills us with a sense of quiet pride. We can't but be impressed by the wisdom and commitment of our country's great visionary leaders who shaped this extraordinary testament of faith and hope.

The book is not only a piece of analytical research and synthesis. It is also a book which provides practical insights into how the Constitutional provisions have been translated into legislations and other programmatic interventions. The author traces the progress made so far and the long road yet to be traversed to establish social equality in a holistic manner.

He ends the book with two very important thoughtful chapters that lay out very clearly the critical elements that are needed to move forward faster on the unfinished national agenda. He provides a Road-Map of action programmes, legislative as well as schematic, for resolving the existential conditions of continuing deprivations and disadvantages of Dalits, Advasis and SEBCs and for bringing about their empowerment. As rightly emphasized by him, only through the empowerment of the Dalits and Adivasis and also the More, Most and Extremely Backward castes of the SEBCs our nation can progress optimally.

The Constitution of our country lays the foundation for the integrated, harmonious and egalitarian society. The author calls it a "sublime edifice having a direct bearing on SC, ST and BCs that imparts to the Indian Constitution its moral flavor, unique among the constitutions of the world."

How far has the country progressed in translating this grand vision into a reality?

The author acknowledges the progress, however slow, of the enactment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 and Amendment Act in 2015. However, as the author clearly details in Chapter 6, there have been inordinate delays and a big gap between constitutional mandates and laws and executive actions.

He examines the implementation of various constitutional provisions related to the identification of SCs, STs and Socially and Educationally Backward classes, political reservation, reservation in public employment and education, reservation in promotion, prohibition of bonded labour and the unique provision for development of STs. I fully endorse the author's view that these articles in the constitution must be sincerely and holistically implemented. There is no better tribute we can pay to the founding fathers than to breathe life into these articles which are an eloquent expression of a world view that has social inclusion and social justice as the cardinal overarching principles.

I compliment the author for his painstaking research and meticulous eye for detail. His suggestions for remedying the current situation where the laws for SCs and STs have been "hampered by lacunae of content, casual implementation and indifference at the top". His analysis of the history of implementation of a number of laws like Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes POA Act, 1989, Tribal land regulations and Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 and his suggestions for further strengthening the provisions of the laws as well as more effective implementation are worth following up. I hope all the legislative bodies of the center and the states will take serious note of these suggestions and move expeditiously to consider amendments to the existing laws and enactment of new laws in the next few months.

The author also examines the current schemes for economic improvement and educational advancement of SCs and STs and various instruments for allocating resources like the Special Component Plan for Schedule Castes (SCP) and the Tribal sub-Plan (TSP)

While all the legislations and schemes suggested by him in his Road Map are important, I want to emphasize one of these legislations and one of these schemes as crucially important at present.

One is the "SCP and TsP and SC and ST Development Authorities" legislation, at the level of the Center as well as States. The other is the scheme for rapid and total elimination of Dalit landlessness, and along with it the landlessness of other rural landless agricultural labor families through the Task Force method, and provision of group minor irrigation for all lands of SCs and STs.

It should be remembered that these are solemn national commitments made expressly by the President of India in his Address to the joint session of the Parliament in 2004. I am hopeful that the government will expeditiously consider moving forward and take the next steps.

The author concludes that "the total liberation, full empowerment of SCs and STs is a goal so near and yet so far. It is so near because what is required to be done is well-known and what is to be done is entirely within the competence of India's financial, governance and administrative resources. It is so far because the inner fire of patriotism and determination required to achieve this goal is very much in deficit."

I would like all of us to take note of this "action deficit", as it were and gain inspiration from the illustrious heritage of our ancient land. Ours was a land that gave the world a universal vision of inclusion and justice. Ours is the land that saw the whole world as one family. Ours is the land that prayed for welfare of all creatures living and non-living. "Sarve Janaah Sukhino Bhavantu". Ours is the land which reverberated to the music of Annamacharya in the 15th century who spoke of the same divine spirit in in all human beings irrespective of which caste one belonged to. Ours is the glorious land where Basaveswara in Karnataka and Sankaradeb in Assam led social movements in the 12th and the 15th centuries. These well springs of our civilization have somehow dried up sometime and we have come to tolerate injustice and exclusion. This cannot continue any longer.

We have taken the solemn resolve to deepen our democracy by caring for those who have been left out of the democratic process. Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas has become our national goal. Antyodaya is taken as the non-negotiable approach. However, we have unpleasant realities to confront. That is the biggest challenge before us today.

As the author said, we know what we should do but are not doing it. We are not getting our act together. Arjuna was in a similar plight in the Bhagavadgita. Krishna, his divine mentor tells him: "kshudram hridaya daurbalyam tyaktvottishtha parantapa" (This weak heart will not get you anywhere. Get over this despondent attitude and inaction and stand up). In the same spirit, I would urge upon all governments and executive authorities and institutions at every level to scrupulously and meticulously implement every provision of every law and scheme for the SCs, STs and SEdBCs.

I would like to remind this august gathering that Swami Vivekananda had said: "In India, there are two great evils: trampling on the women and grinding the poor through caste restrictions".

We cannot create a developed India if there are glaring inequalities based on caste, creed, religion and sex. The evil of caste we have inherited casts a shadow on our rich culture. It is a blot on the universal, humanistic philosophy we have espoused.

We must as a nation take the resolve to implement the constitutional provisions pertaining to SCs, STs and SEdBCs. We must get inspired by the noble thoughts from the past, commit ourselves to the letter and spirit of the Constitution and take swift, decisive action. As we say, to again use a phrase from our culture, let us have "tri-karana- shuddhi" which means we must implement with a clear mind, pleasant expression, and effective action.

Let us take a cue from the analysis contained in this book and take this challenge headlong. Let us hear the voices of those we are trying to serve- the depressed, oppressed and suppressed. Let us create a climate of trust, mutual respect and harmonious co-existence. Let us leave no one behind as we build a new India that is sustainable, developed and deeply caring about social justice and inclusion. There should be a national debate on sub-categorisation of Social groups to reach the un-reached.

Jai Hind!"

KSD/BK

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