

# Text of Vice-President's address at the 70th Founders' Day of IIPA

Posted On: 29 MAR 2024 7:28PM by PIB Delhi

This is indeed an important occasion, 70th Founders' Day.

Democracy has to be defined in several facets. Some facets of democracy are potent, essential, and inalienable, and that is embedded in our Constitution. Preamble of the Constitution, particularly fundamental rights in Part 3 of the Constitution, fundamental duties Part 4 of the Constitution. And if we go further, we will find a structure has been designed but to fructify on the ground, to realise on the ground is public administration.

You may have good policies, great vision, but if it is not converted into action around reality, then people do not get benefit. Thereby, I had the good fortune to see it closely when I was elected to Lok Sabha in 1989. I had the privilege to serve the nation as a union minister. I can therefore, vividly recollect the scene then on the point of public order, on the point of economy, on the point of our image globally, on the point of hope and aspiration of our people, their frustration. I had occasion to see it.

It was collision governance of more than 20 parties. I have better memories of that. Our economy was cause of concern. Our foreign exchange reserve was dwindling. It was swinging between 1 billion dollars or 2 billion dollars.

We had to suffer that pain, never to be remembered, that our physical gold was airlifted to be placed in two banks in Switzerland to sustain our credibility. I was witness to it.

Back then, I had occasion to go to Jammu and Kashmir. I was part of the delegation. I saw the situation there. We had several aspects that were cause of concern. The world did not regard us even as a developing Nation. Our economy was cause of concern for them. Global entities were working as our disciplinary authority. I was witness to this.

I am fortunate now, after 30 years, in 2019, when I became governor to West Bengal, to witness the big change. During the 30 years, we traversed our Political journey through collision governance. A single-party regime eluded till 2014. So, if you take that span, the coalition governance turned out to be highly debilitating for our functioning, for our delivery system, and also our image globally. 2014 brought a big change, a single party came to power.

Let me clarify, because there are people waiting in the wings to misunderstand you for a drop of a hat: I am not a stakeholder in politics, I am a stakeholder in governance, I am a stakeholder in nationalism.

In 2014, beyond political landscaping, it was alarmingly worrisome. If we come to the economic part of it, our country was one of the fragile 5. That was the big challenge. We were being questioned by Global entities IMF World Bank, as our neighbors are being questioned now. From fragile 5, we have traversed a difficult terrain, faced strong headwinds, but we are lucky because of the contribution of visionary policies, affirmative governance, highly productive executive, and contribution of the people. That this nation became one of the top 5 global economies in the process, overtaking our erstwhile colonial ruler, also other countries like Canada, France. It is a matter of time, and everyone in the world acknowledges it. In the next 2 years, Bharat will be the third-largest global economy ahead of Japan and Germany.

In 1989, I could not even dream of it. Look at where we are. Those who used to advise us are seeking our advice. The World Bank president comes, shares talks about our digital penetration and says India has achieved in the field of 6 years what is not achievable in more than 40 years, advocating to the entire world to learn lessons from India. India will be able to help you in digital infrastructure.

50% of global digital transactions take place in this land. Further, our people have adaptability to technology, but that is not sufficient. You have technology at your door; internet access is now available in every nook and corner.

If we go by our per capita data consumption, our consumption is more than USA and China taken together. That's a big change.

The world faced the pandemic COVID, and everyone was focusing on how India, then with 1.3 billion population, would face the challenge. They don't have a vaccine of their own. The country is highly diversified, and there could be chaos.

At that time, we had visionary leadership. People understand now what is meant by lighting a lamp, what is meant by people curfew, what is meant by clapping for COVID warriors.

Not only did we take care of our own population, we assisted 100 other countries with Covaxin. This generated a very powerful cutting-edge 2 hours of soft diplomacy.

When I meet world leaders, they say we are grateful to India for giving us Covaxin. It was given to them as a gift.

Article 370 is the only article in the Indian Constitution that is temporary. For reasons I can't figure out, it was taken as permanent. Those who took an oath under the constitution became members of parliament, contrary to their own assertion that you can't remove it.

Some silos that control economy power everything, and for their own benefit, have disappeared. A big achievement, but for me, the scene is different. I went there in 1990 as a member of the council of ministers. I see all around deadly silence. Now there is vibrancy. Go by statistics. What has happened to it?

Come to another aspect: women are the most important part of development. Your economy will take a Quantum jump if the due is given to them, and the first due is given when they become part of policymaking. For about three decades, sincere efforts were made, but for one reason or another, those efforts did not succeed. The efforts fructified, justice was done to half of humanity in this country. In September 2023, parliament passed enabling women participation to  $\frac{1}{3}$  in Lok Sabha and state legislature, and that has an inbuilt facet of social justice. If there is a reservation for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe, reservation here is horizontal and vertical, one-third of scheduled tribe represented from women category, same about scheduled caste. No one imagined this would happen.

Let's go further. We were suffering from legislation colonial rules. That was painful. The penal provisions were made by the rulers. These officers were very hard and harsh. They did not take into consideration the rights of citizens in a sovereign nation. Dand Vidhan became Nyaya Vidhan.

Look at the global image. It was at Bali the Prime Minister took the flame of G20, 2023 was our presidency. India gave it a qualitative angle, democratic angle, highly impactful angle. In about 60 locations, it's back to every Indian territory, every state. There was a G20 function, and what is gratifying is the cooperative federalism was in full play. All state governments enthusiastically participated. The occasion was successful in every state. And then we had G20 final summit. It was in Bharat Mandapam, one of the top 10 Global convention centres. India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi received heads of States.

India believes in inclusivity in a world that is stable. So, G20 had inclusion of African Union as a member thanks to the visionary leadership of this country.

The Global South, a huge chunk in the world, was ignored, but India became the most prominent voice of the Global South. Everyone knows what is Global South today.

Further, Biofuels with took note of it when it came to trade. We had trade mechanisms earlier, thousands of years ago, but look at where India lands: Middle East and Europe. That opens enormous opportunities for all.

G20 marked to the world. Everyone applauded it, and trust me, everyone left with one impression: it will be difficult to reach the level at which India has reached in organising G20.

Along with G20, we had P20, and that was held where at Yashobhoomi. No one knows where it came up, and suddenly we find in our country we have a facility that matches best in the world.

Look at our highways, look at the connectivity we have generated on road, rail, and sky. The world acknowledges that India is a power to be at number 1.

We are not a sleeping giant; we are a country on the rise. The rise is unstoppable, the rise is incremental, and trust me, the rise will be vertical, just a matter of time.

In Amrit kaal, we have laid a firm foundation for Bharat @2047 to be a developed nation. I have no doubt. I may not be around, and some very distinguished people in the front row.

There is a marathon march to 2047. Now, my young friends are part of it. You are the warriors of this march. You will have the occasion to see Bharat @2047 at its peak.

If we talk about technology, even with respect to radio, television, we used to look at the West. When would we have radio of their model, a television of their model? We now no longer beat Quantum computing. We have a mission, a dedicated fund of 6000 crore rupees working in this country. In the world, there are countries not in double digits for it.

Our green hydrogen mission finds have been committed 9000 crore rupees. By 2030, it will be a game-changer in terms of employment and investment.

Disruptive Technologies, we are focusing on it. We are ahead of others. It is a challenge and opportunity called for a regulated regime. Working on it, we are ahead of others.

There are challenges, and challenges mostly come from within, supported from without. India's rise is not digestible in some quarters. By virtue of its civilization, economy size, population, democratic working, India has to be in the Global room. We have world organisation United Nation to name one. We need to be there. This institution, United Nation, cannot be as productive and effective unless you have representation of a country like India that has the unique position of being the only country in the world with a constitutionally structured democracy at all levels. Our constitution provides for democracy, elections in villages, in municipalities, in districts.

Democracy has no meaning unless there is a rule of law, a fundamental facet, equality before the law. If I do not have equal rights as compared to someone else, my energy will go down. I will not take the benefit of democracy. In democracy, ignoring your pedigree, all have to be equal. That was not the same. Privilege, pedigree, some people thought we are part of it, we are above the law, we are immune from the law. That has been demolished. Equality before the law is the new norm.

What is the justification for a person or an institution to take to the street when law is set in motion? Our judicial system should be accessed, and our judiciary has vindicated its spinal strength, its independence, understanding, people-centric approach.

Can people orchestrate in a campaign mode a pernicious tendency to get away from the rule of law? How can one engaging in transgression of law play the victim card? People are playing. We need to be extremely alive to it.

Corruption was the bane of our society for long. A young Prime Minister lamentedly reflected that we aimed intended people at large, only 15% reaches there. But now there is no leakage, no corruption in the process. A category has referred beneficiary of corruption. They invested every nook and corner of power corridors. They controlled power corridors. They extra-legally leveraged in decision-making. Construction was rewarding corruption. Corruption would gain you employment, a position, an opportunity, a job. The situation was so worrisome. If we go by tapes that came in the public domain 2 years ago, the system was so ravaged that appointment of ministers was being determined beyond the rule of law. That corruption has been challenged. Now, corruption is no longer rewarding. Corruption is not a passage to opportunities,

employment, or a contract. It is a passage to jail.

Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) we have to understand is fitting in our civilization. We are home to those who are persecuted. We are to those who are kicked out from elsewhere: Parsis, Jews, Zoroastrians.

What was done by CAA, a reprieve I would say belated, a healing touch very late was given to those who were in this country in a difficult situation, driven out, persecuted for their religion, and they have been in this country for more than a decade because the cutoff date is 2014. It is not an invitation now; they are already there. And this can be that in our commitment at the time of the painful partition, and some people call it discriminatory.

How this can be discriminatory, no one is stopped from applying for citizenship of this country. Anyone from any country can apply for the citizenship of this country. It is available as before, no change. It will be considered on merit. Has anyone been deprived of citizenship under the Act?

These narratives are orchestrated in a design to taint, tarnish our image, our institution. We need to speak out our minds; our silence will resonate in our ears. There was an occasion, at the point of time in history when I could make my point, I kept quiet.

Recently, people are telling us about the rule of law. Our country in Europe, a developed democracy, they need to think within. They need to attend to their own affairs. India is a democratic nation with robust judicial systems. This cannot be compromised by any individual or any group. It is unique. It is that institution of judiciary that has met at midnight, met at holiday, imparted relief. Can we target our institution because they conduct them in a particular manner? The institution has a point of view on the issue.

A group of people without being registered or recognized party acts as a political party. What do we do? They are not accountable. They get traction. We must rise above it.

I firmly believe nationalism has no negotiation. It is not optional. Through you, I would also appeal that economic nationalism is deeply embedded in the concept of nationalism. Being vocal for local or "Sab Desi". If we practise it, we will save billions of dollars in foreign exchange. We will generate more works for our hands. We will find a situation where entrepreneurship will blossom.

Friends, India is immune now to any headwinds. Our rocket took off. It was difficult for India to rise like a rocket, but the rocket took off; the rocket caught out of the gravitational force.

I would say

|

You know, the international aeronautical society has officially declared Shiv Shakti point. We have to be extremely careful and sensitive in neutralising the Anti-National narrative with respect to our robust first judicial system, our democratic fabric.

I conclude by saying we are proud Indians. We take pride in our historic exponential growth, and we will take this Bharat as a global leader because Bharat being a Global leader means we indicate Moto one Earth, one family, one future, and this means that we have not coined it in G20; it has been there duly demonstrated over centuries; it has been there for years.

Thank you so much for inviting me!

\*\*\*\*\*

**MS/RC/JK**

