

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASSION OF CONSTITUTION DAY**

New Delhi, November 26, 2021

On the Constitution Day, I feel very happy to be here with all of you. India is world's largest democracy. I am sure that all of you are also feeling proud of our great democracy, on this occasion. In this very Central Hall, 72 years ago, the framers of our Constitution had adopted the document to build a bright future of Independent India and gave it to themselves on behalf of the people of India.

When we wrested the right to shape our own destiny, India was a country exploited by long foreign rule that had left its teeming millions poor and illiterate. But people were charged with enthusiasm to change that situation and build the nation. What our industrious countrymen needed was a constitutional structure. In a short span of about seven decades, the people of India have scripted an incredible story of democratic progress that has left the world amazed. I believe that India's journey of growth and development has been made possible due to the impetus provided by our Constitution.

Our Constitution contains all those lofty ideals for which the people of the world have been looking towards India with respect and hope. Our Constitution, beginning with the words "We the people of India", makes it clear that the Constitution of India is an expression of the collective aspirations of the people. The members of the Constituent Assembly, as representatives of the people, discussed and debated each and every provision of the Constitution. They were not ordinary people. Many of them had proved their talent in the field of law, many members were eminent scholars of their respective fields and some were philosophers too. But all of them were participating in the making of the Constitution only as elected representatives of the people to the Constituent Assembly. Behind their statements was the halo of their good deeds and

high moral values. The people had come to know about the greatness of their character during our freedom struggle. In about three years of the making of our Constitution, those great personalities gave shape to the collective vision of India with great care. I am happy that today the digital versions of the Constituent Assembly Debates, and the calligraphed and updated versions of the Constitution have been released. Thus, with the help of technology, all these invaluable documents have become accessible to all.

In the constituent assembly debates we get glimpses of the greatness of human thought and consciousness channelled for nation building. With the digital version of the debates made available, not only our countrymen but the whole world, especially the younger generation, will get to know about the greatness and potential of our country and will also get guidance for the future. In the calligraphed version of the Constitution, people will get to see the finest examples of the excellence of our art, culture and ideals contained in our history and legend. The example of such an artistic presentation of the basic text of governance can be rarely seen elsewhere. With the updated version of the Constitution, citizens, especially students will get knowledge about the journey of our constitutional progress so far. The initiative to conduct online quiz on the subject of constitutional democracy is highly commendable. This interesting method will be very effective in promoting constitutional values among our citizens, especially the younger generation.

Honorable Members of Parliament,

The framers of our Constitution, reposing unwavering faith in the wisdom of the common man, gave the right of universal adult franchise to all the citizens despite the lack of literacy among our people and several such apprehensions. No other democracy had provided the right of universal adult franchise from the very beginning. When the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar presented the proposal for universal adult franchise on 16 June 1949, it was passed unanimously, without much resistance. It is particularly noteworthy in this context that in countries like England and America, women were given the right to vote after a long struggle. But in our country, not only

women were given the right to vote from the very beginning, but many women were members of the Constituent Assembly and they made an unprecedented contribution in the making of the Constitution. We, the people of India, can proudly say that along with founding-fathers, our Constitution has also been made by its founding-mothers.

Some western scholars said that the system of adult suffrage was bound to fail in India. But this experiment was not only proved successful, but has gained in strength over the past decades. Even other democracies have learned a lot from the Indian democracy. If the challenges before the nation, at the time of our independence, are taken into account, then 'Indian democracy' can undoubtedly be considered as one of the greatest achievements of human history. For this achievement, we salute the foresight of the framers of the Constitution and the wisdom of Jana-Gana-Mana.

Honorable Members of Parliament,

On 26 November 1949, a few moments before signing the Constitution document as the President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad made a statement. I would like to repeat some of his words. He had said [QUOTE] -

“A law giver requires intellectual equipment but even more than that capacity to take a balanced view of things, to act independently and above all to be true to those fundamental things of life—in one word—to have character.” [UNQUOTE]

According to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, there can be no yardstick for measuring the capabilities of public representatives. Yet, his expectation from law-makers is evident from his statement. He wanted that the Members of Parliament should have a high level of morality and ethics, as they had a dual responsibility – first, for their own conduct and secondly – for their work as representatives of the people.

Honorable Members of Parliament,

This Parliament of ours is at the apex of India's democratic system. All the Members of Parliament are defenders of the dignity of the Parliament, whether they represent the ruling party or the opposition. All MPs gather here to discuss issues related to public interest along with making laws. In fact, the elected representatives of the Gram Sabha, the Vidhan Sabha and the Parliament should have only one priority. That singular priority lies in working for the welfare of all the people of their constituencies and for the interest of the nation. There may be differences of opinion, but no difference should be so great as to hinder the real purpose of public service. It is natural for members of the ruling party and the opposition to compete – but this competition should be about being better representatives and doing better things for the public good. Only then will it be considered healthy competition. Competition in Parliament should not be confused with rivalry. We all believe that our Parliament is a 'Temple of Democracy'. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of every parliamentarian to conduct themselves in this temple of democracy with the same spirit of reverence with which they do in their places of worship.

The opposition is, in fact, the most important element of democracy. Without an effective opposition, democracy becomes ineffective. It is expected that the Government and the opposition, despite their differences, continue to work together in the best interests of the citizens. Our constitution makers had envisioned this and it is also necessary for nation-building.

If all of you, the Members of Parliament, look at your responsibility as an extension of the ideals of the freedom struggle, you will remain mindful of your duty towards strengthening the legacy of the framers of the Constitution. If you realize that you are occupying the places where once our constitution makers used to sit, you will naturally feel a deep sense of history and sense of duty.

Honorable Members of Parliament,

Many remarkable examples of their sense of duty were demonstrated by our fellow citizens during the pandemic of COVID-19. Given our huge population and its density, it was even more difficult for us to meet the

extraordinary challenge posed by the pandemic. Nevertheless, our fellow citizens rose to the challenge and the administration also left no stone unturned to save as many lives as possible. It is long since the initial months of the pandemic, but those scenes will be etched in our memories for a long time to come. The scenes of how people all across the country, did their best to help each other and how Corona warriors from different spheres of life presented inspiring examples of brotherhood. We not only developed vaccines for ourselves, but also took the lead in providing vaccine to other countries. This endeavour of ours will be recorded as the largest of its kind in the history of humanity.

Honorable Members of Parliament,

We have recently observed the year-long 150th birth anniversary celebrations of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. We are now celebrating the 75th anniversary of our Independence. It is a matter of happiness for all of us that people from all over the country are actively participating in various programs organized as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. It is evident from the enthusiasm of ordinary citizens that they carry within their hearts, deep respect for those known and unknown freedom fighters whose sacrifices made it possible for us to breathe the air of freedom.

Commemorating such historic events are also occasions to remind us of the values which our freedom fighters fought for. Those values of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are enshrined in the preamble of our Constitution. On the occasion of Constitution Day, let us rededicate ourselves to follow those great national ideals in our daily lives. By following these ideals, we will further enhance our stature on the world stage and will be equipped to face any challenge effectively.

Honorable Members of Parliament,

The preamble of our Constitution is regarded as the conscience of the Constitution. The initiative to organize a collective recitation of the preamble of the Constitution by all the fellow citizens at the end of today's program is highly commendable. This will further strengthen the sense of pride in all our countrymen for the ideals of the Constitution. In

a little while we will do a verbatim reading of the preamble of the Constitution together.

On the occasion of Constitution Day, I extend my warm greetings to all the fellow citizens.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!