

SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 11TH FOUNDATION DAY OF FOUNDATION FOR RESTORATION OF NATIONAL VALUES(FRNV)

I am happy to be here today on the occasion of the 11th Foundation day of Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV). At the outset, I would like to congratulate Dr E. Sreedharan, Founder President of FRNV, for this noble venture.

2. Padma Vibhushan Dr E. Sreedharan, popularly known as the “Metro Man of India”, is a man of action and immaculate perfection. A career civil servant, Dr. Sreedharan helmed the change for the public transportation in India. He has played an active role in the transformation of Kolkata Metro, Delhi Metro, Cochin Shipyard, Konkan Railways, Kochi Metro, Lucknow metro

and the Jaipur metro. When Dr. Sreedharan joined the Cochin Shipyard in October 1979, it was undergoing a phase of unproductivity. The production of its first ship MV Rani Padmini had been delayed for a long period. When he took over, he turned the fortunes of the shipyard around and made sure its first ship was built while he was its chairman and managing director (CMD). In 1981, under Dr. Sreedharan's leadership, the shipyard launched its first ship, the MV Rani Padmini.

From then to now, under his stewardship the public transport infrastructure has only seen an exponential boom. It was his clarity of vision and clear strategy of implementation that led him to fulfill his mandate in shorter durations than expected. I would like to take this stage to

applaud the dedication and the service provided by Dr. Sreedharan in the development of India.

3. It is indeed a matter of great satisfaction that this Foundation, started in 2008, under the guidance of Swami Bhooma-nanda Tirtha and other eminent persons along with Dr. E. Sreedharan, is committed to raising the consciousness of all citizens of our planet, and especially of those in leadership positions. It aims at inculcating in them an abiding inner compulsion to serve with values and integrity, through the maintenance of the highest standards of probity and transparency in governance.

Distinguished Guests Ladies & Gentlemen,

4. The topic that I have been asked to speak on today is, ***“The Values we stand for”***. Let me begin by asking, what really are ‘values’? Why do we put so much importance on

'Values'? Dear Friends, *Values are important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a community or Nation about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. In fact, values are universal and transcend geographical, political or cultural boundaries. Since time immemorial, emphasis has been laid on them because they have major influence on our behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations.*

Dear Friends,

5. To my mind, the values that we Indians as a people stand for have been elucidated and enshrined lucidly in our Constitution. Our Constitution, a document that I often describe as the *Magna Carta* of socio-economic and

political transformation provides us with seven fundamental rights –

- Right to equality,
- Right to freedom,
- Right against exploitation,
- Right to freedom of religion,
- Cultural and educational rights,
- Right to property and
- Right to constitutional remedies,

Each of which are justifiable in the court of law.

Initially, however, our Founding Fathers did not foresee the need for listing out Fundamental Duties for the citizens of India, perhaps on the presumption that we would behave as model citizens with proper sense of responsibility, especially as Freedom from British Rule came after much misery, sacrifice and hardship. They thought that we would value our freedom and strive to

preserve it and to pass on its benefits to the succeeding generation. But sadly, after the initial euphoria of independence, many amongst us ceased to bother about Nation Building and succumbed to self-interest and greed.

Distinguished Guests Ladies & Gentlemen,

6. It is my firm belief that no Nation can afford to be slack in their conduct or forget the age old values which they have cherished for centuries. Our civilizational values of ***Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्)*** and ***Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niramayah*** are the essence of our Nation. We see the whole world as one family and pray for the happiness and good health of all. In fact, our national identity has emerged through a long drawn process of confluence, assimilation, and co-existence. The multiplicity in culture, faith and language is

what makes India special. We derive our strength from not just tolerance of differences but respect for them. We accept and respect our pluralism. We celebrate our diversity. These have been a part of our collective consciousness for millennia.

The Directive principles of State Policy enshrined vide articles 36 – 51 of the Indian Constitution and the Fundamental Duties inserted vide article 51A through the 42nd Constitutional amendment of the year 1976 aimed at underlining and implementing, in letter and spirit, the above mentioned philosophies.

Dear Friends,

7. I am not one of those who are despondent about the apparent deterioration of Values. True, there have been incidents of communal and caste based violence,

denigration of institutions, indisciplined behaviour and lack of public morality etc. but the Nation emerges stronger than weaker after such incidents. We opted for Universal Suffrage at a time when many developed countries had not adopted it. Many questioned our wisdom in doing so. But since then, we have seen elections to Parliament, State Assemblies and other elected bodies being conducted peacefully and sizeable section of people exercising their franchise.

8. Having said that, I would like to underline that **Constitutionalism** should be the prime value that we should stand and fight for. The core constitutional values enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India are the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation. The constitutional philosophy is of a social

order with egalitarian ethos committed to distributive justice. This can be achieved by performing the fundamental citizenship duty to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national freedom struggle. Ultimately, the noble ideals of unity and equality enshrined in the Constitution of India will have to be practiced by citizens, if it has to become a reality. It goes without saying that proper example should be set by leaders in politics, business and public life.

Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi had once listed out seven social sins and emphasized that leaders and citizens, irrespective of their calling in life, had to consistently desist from practicing them. These are:

- Politics without Principles
- Commerce without Morality

- Wealth without Work
- Education without character
- Science without Humanity
- Pleasure without Conscience and
- Worship without Sacrifice.

Dear Friends,

9. It is time that we introspect how we have fared so far – whether we have desisted from these evils or succumbed to them. Our democratic institutions such as Parliament and State Assemblies are meant for free and frank exchange of views and making of policies that benefit the Nation and its citizens. In earlier days, the level of debates in Parliament used to be of a very high order but now, such debates are very rare. Behaviour in Parliament and

Assemblies has deteriorated and protection from criminal prosecution for acts committed inside these Houses have tended to be misused. What standards are we setting for the common man?

10. The citizen's rights are sought to be safeguarded by the Judiciary. Hence, the Judiciary is given immense importance in a Nation. Judges have to be respected for the office they hold and for their impartial conduct. It is a matter of pride that our Judicial System has withstood the test of time and remained one of the strong pillars of democracy. Nevertheless, recent rumblings in the Higher Judiciary, resulting in public disclosure of internal disputes on work allocation etc. has not been well received. It is time that the Highest Judiciary sets its own House in order and regains the confidence of the citizens.

11. However benevolent the Government may be, delivery of services to citizens in an efficient manner depends on the bureaucracy. It is true that during transition of government from British Rule and thereafter, the Civil Service has displayed maturity and efficiently discharged their duties. Even now, the Civil Service has rendered yeoman service and should continue to do so. Civil service has to constantly evolve its working by adapting to new challenges. It has to earnestly transform itself into the vehicle of socio-economic transformation rather than serving as an instrument of state coercion. Corruption, whether in public or private life, is an evil that has to be rooted out completely, if the Nation has to progress with peace and dignity. I am happy that Government has appointed a Lok Pal and I hope this institution will take strict action on complaints of corruption.

12. The long term solution for restoration of Values lies in education at all levels whereby the importance of personal integrity and spirit of public service is imbibed and internalized by all citizens. Such education cannot be restricted to class rooms but should be made available in all social settings, be it, the family, the work place and meeting places. Eminent personalities, who have lived these noble values in their lives, should be emulated. For this purpose, media should highlight their role in appropriate manner.

Distinguished Guests Ladies & Gentlemen,

13. Education of children is the most important step to ensure that the future generation of the country becomes model citizens. Value based education has to start at home and in schools. In earlier times, parents and

grandparents spent a lot of time with their children and grandchildren and educated them on Values through stories drawn from the Panchatantra etc. With the increasing stress of modern life, parents do not find enough time for education of their children. Frequently, they themselves do not observe proper Values in daily life and these instances leave a lasting impression on the children. Teachers in schools have the burden of completing their course work and do not find the time or the necessity to instruct children on proper behaviour.

I am happy that many institutions have now instituted Value Education for children. I am extremely happy that the FRNV has embarked on preparing manuals for training of teachers in Value Education. This is a very noble task and I wish them success in all their endeavours.

Thank You
Jai Hind