

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE DELIVERS FIRST BHAIRON SINGH SHEKHAWAT  
MEMORIAL LECTURE ON THE TOPIC ‘HISTORY OF  
PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN INDIA’**

**Jaipur, Rajasthan :MAY 15, 2017**

1. I am honoured to be invited to deliver the inaugural Memorial Lecture instituted in memory of our former Vice-President Shri Bhairon Singh Sekhawat, an outstanding statesman, humble son of the soil and a man of the masses.
2. Shri Shekhawat and I share a long history of friendship. We served together in the Rajya Sabha in the 1970s. Later, while he was Chief Minister of Rajasthan, I was Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission, I had opportunity to see his extensive knowledge about problems being faced by citizens of Rajasthan, and his will to eradicate these day to day problems. I was deeply impressed by his commitment to the downtrodden and poor.
3. During his illustrious public life spanning over five decades, he held several important offices. He was a member of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly for over a period of forty five years beginning 1952 and also a member of the Rajya Sabha for about three years. He served as the Chief Minister of Rajasthan for three terms and also held the office of the Leader of the Opposition of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly. He was elected to the august office of the Vice-President of the country in August 2002 and served till July 2007. As ex-officio Chairman, Rajya Sabha he conducted the proceedings of the Upper House with great distinction and added grace and elegance to the office. Besides holding these high offices, Shri Shekhawatji was associated with several welfare projects which touched the lives of ordinary citizens. Today, his rich legacy remains with us and he is fondly remembered as a sagacious statesman, a distinguished legislator and a committed votary of humanitarian values.
4. Ladies and Gentlemen,  
  
I have chosen the topic of “History of Parliamentary Democracy in India” for today’s lecture.
5. Our modern Parliamentary system of governance and legislative institutions owe their origin and growth to our British legacy. Yet, these

institutions attained organic growth on the Indian soil because India was home to republican forms of government, deliberative representative bodies and self-governing institutions in many parts of country from as early as the Vedic age, circa 3000-1000 B.C. The rulers of ancient India were bound by *Dharma*, which was akin to the rule of law, constitutionalism or limited government. The *Rigveda* and the *Atharvaveda* make mention of *Sabha* (General Assembly) and *Samiti* (House of Elders). Besides, the *Aitareya Brahmana*, Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the *Mahabharata*, Ashokan pillar inscriptions, Buddhist and Jain texts, among many others, bear witness to the existence of several republics during the post-vedic period in our history.

6. Representative bodies at the village level like the *Gram Sanghas*, *Gram Sabhas* or *Panchayats* continued to function and flourish through many dynasties, including the medieval and Mughal periods till the advent of the British rule.
7. The origins of the modern day legislative process can be traced back to the 1601 Charter which authorized the Governor and the East India Company "to make, ordain and constitute such and so many laws, constitutions, orders and ordinances", as shall seem necessary and convenient for good government. The Charter of 1726 vested, for the first time, the Governors and the Councils of the three Presidencies with legislative power.
8. The Regulating Act of 1773 holds a special significance in the legislative history of India because it marks the beginning of parliamentary control over the government of the Company. This Act is also said to have started the process of territorial integration and administrative centralization in India. It accorded supremacy to the Presidency of Bengal and the Governor of Bengal was appointed as the Governor-General. A Council consisting of four members was constituted to assist the Governor-General.
9. The Charter Act of 1833 terminated the trading rights of the Company and rendered it merely an administrative agency of the Crown in India. The Governor-General of Bengal was, thereafter, designated as the Governor General of India and empowered to administer the whole of British India. For the first time, the Governor General's Government was known as the Government of India and his Council as the Indian Council. This Act set up one legislative council for all the British territories in India and introduced an element of institutional specialization by differentiating the law-making meetings of the Council from its executive meetings. Legislative functions of the state was thus for the first time separated from its executive functions.

10. In 1852, the British Indian Association of Kolkata petitioned the British Parliament for establishment of a legislature in India possessing a popular character reflecting the growing political consciousness of the period. It was perhaps for the first time that Indian opinion was being expressed on the subject of legislative reforms.
11. Under the Charter Act of 1853, discussions in the Council, when acting in its legislative capacity, became oral instead of in writing. Bills passed through the usual three stages and were referred to Select Committees. Legislative business was conducted in public instead of in secret and reports of proceedings were officially published. Standing orders were adopted to conduct and regulate proceedings. The new Council conceived its duties not to be confined only to legislation but also began to assume the character of a miniature representative assembly, assembled for the purpose of enquiry into and redress of grievances.
12. The Act of 1853 gave the legislature for the first time the right to frame its own rules and procedure. Shri Prasanna Kumar Tagore was appointed to the post of Clerk of the Council and he went on to provide the Council with a parliamentary form of procedure and encouraged it to assert its independence as a separate organ of government. Public were allowed to witness the proceedings of the Council and press reporting was permitted in 1856. Despite the progressive establishment of legislative practices and procedures, there was, however, no Indian participation in the Council.
13. The Government of India Act 1858, initiated for the first time non-official participation in the Council. The Governor-General was authorized to nominate to his council 'not less than six nor more than twelve' additional members at least one half of whom were to be non-officials. In 1862, Viceroy Lord Canning appointed three Indians- Maharaja Sir Narendra Singh of Patiala, Raja Deo Narain Singh of Benares and Raja Sir Dinkar Rao Raghunath of Gwalior to the newly constituted Legislative Council. Between 1862 and 1892, forty-five Indians were nominated to the Legislative Council. Most of them were ruling princes or chiefs and rich zamindar families. During the Viceroyalty of Lord Rippon, Durga Charan Law, a merchant, Raja Shiva Prasad, an Inspector of Schools and Syed Ameer Ali, a Presidency Magistrate were nominated. Editor of the Hindoo Patriot, Kristodas Pal recommended by the British Indian Association and after his death Peare Mohan Mukherjee were also nominated to the Council by Lord Rippon. Intellectuals such as Syed Ahmed Khan, V.N. Mandlik, K.L. Nulkar and Rash Behari Ghosh were among those nominated to the Council during 1872-92.

14. The nominated Indian members however took little interest in the discussions and usually read out short prepared speeches. They remained docile and presented little opposition to the Government. There remained at the same time strong opposition to Indian involvement in the Councils on the part of many Englishmen. A satirical pamphlet in 1883 argued “any encouragement to the Bengalee Baboos would result in nothing less than complete extinction of British rule, that a self governing India would prove an abortive parliamentary democracy which would run into chaos and subjected to military dictatorship”.
15. Introduction of the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill (1883-84) or Ilbert bill led to the first meeting of the first National Conference at Kolkata on 29 December 1883. Surendranath Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose were its leading organizers. Bose depicted this conference as the first stage towards the formation of a National Indian Parliament. The Conference demanded introduction of representative assemblies for the advancement of the people of India. The National Conference was in many ways the precursor of the Indian National Congress.
16. The founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 hastened the evolution of responsible Government. At its very first session, the Congress passed a resolution asking for constitutional reforms and for the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members to the Legislative Councils and the right to discuss the budget. Delivering his Presidential Address at the first session in Kolkata, W.C. Banerjee described the Congress as the National Assembly of India.
17. The demand for reform and expansion of the Legislative Councils continued to be made by every annual Congress and became more vociferous from year to year. The Congress considered the reform of the Councils at the root of all other reforms. At the same time, Viceroy Lord Dufferin publicly dismissed Congressmen as “a microscopic minority” and said democratic methods of government or the adoption of parliamentary system to India would be a very big jump into the unknown.
18. In response, speaking on the resolution on the reform of Legislative Councils at the fifth Congress Session at Bombay (1889), Bannerjea said “If you get that, you get everything else. On it depends the entire future of the country and the future of our administrative system”.
19. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 enlarged the Legislative Council to consist of ‘not less than ten nor more than sixteen’ additional members. In the case of the Governor-General’s Legislative Council, or the Indian Legislative Council as it came to be known, five more ‘additional’ members

were brought in, one being nominated by the non-official members of each of the four Provincial Councils and one by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce. Though the term 'election' was scrupulously avoided, the fact that non-official members of the Provincial Councils recommended and returned their nominees to the Central Council, indicated implicit acceptance of the principle of indirect election.

20. The system of preparing an annual budget and laying it before the Legislature was first introduced in India in 1860 by James Wilson who was a Member of the British Parliament, sent to India as Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council. The first budget was presented on 18 February, 1860. While discussion on the budget as such was not allowed, this was sometimes sought to be made possible by linking the budget with some proposal for taxation. During 1861-62, there were 16 occasions when budget was discussed in that manner. The Council had no right to vote on the Budget.
21. The Act of 1892 conceded to both the Central and Provincial Councils the privilege of financial criticism or the right to discuss the budget under certain conditions for the first time. Members of the Council however still had no powers to submit or propose any resolution or to divide the Council in respect of any financial discussion.
22. Under the Act of 1892, Members were for the first time granted the privilege of asking questions and interrogating Government Members. The first question was asked on 16 February 1893. The questioner was the Maharaja of Bhinga and the question concerned hardships caused by the system of collecting supplies of provision for government officers on tour. During the two years – 1905 and 1906 – only 13 questions were asked and the subjects were Services, Railways, Revenue and Exchange. Sometimes information could be denied on the ground that an answer would involve lengthy preparation by officials.
23. The entry of elected members marked the beginning of the new era in the life of the Council. Congress veteran Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the first elected Indian Member was frank, bold and vigorous in his criticism of government policies. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was known as 'Lion of Bombay' for his contributions to the city and at the same time, 'Ferocious Mehta' because of his role as a Legislator. In order to stem the growth of the nationalist movement in India, Lord Lytton decided to censor the vernacular press. Pherozeshah Mehta vehemently opposed the move. He believed that the press should be as free as possible, and that it was the fundamental duty of the government to educate the masses. "England must raise India to her own level, or India will drag her down to hers," he

warned. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's career was summarized by a leading British journalist who said that Mehta "had stood alone against the bureaucracy, had displayed a courage equal to Gokhale's, an eloquence hardly second to Surendranath Banerjea's, and power of sarcasm hardly rivaled by Motilal Ghose's".

24. During 1890-1909, besides Sir Mehta, the Council had great stalwarts like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Ashutosh Mukherjee, Rash Bihari Ghose, G.M. Chitnavis, P. Ananda Charlu, Bishambarnath, Muhammad Rahimtullah Sayani and Salimulla who made full use of limited opportunities for ventilating the grievances of the people on political, economic and social issues. Gokhale whom some people had started calling 'The Leader of the Opposition' was a great authority on economics. He exposed the Government's contention that budget surpluses showed the health of the economy and showed with facts and figures the extent of dismal and deepening poverty in India resulting from heavy expenditure on the Army, policy of heavy taxation, imposition of excise duties on indigenous industries like textiles, lack of irrigation facilities for farmers etc.
25. The shortcomings of the Act of 1892 were obvious. There remained an official majority in the Councils. The Government could always pass Bills disregarding opposition by Indian members. The vehement criticism by Indian members proved ineffective in preventing the Government from following a policy of repression, large scale imprisonments, deportations etc. following the agitation against the partition of Bengal, natural calamities like the Great Famine and Plague epidemic etc. which in the 1880s resulted in the death of a large number of people.
26. At its 22<sup>nd</sup> session at Kolkata presided over by Dadabhai Naroji in 1906, the Congress declared Swaraj as its goal and demanded immediate expansion of the Legislative Councils to secure larger control over the financial and executive administration of the country. The Indian Councils Act of 1909 empowered the Governor General to nominate one Indian member to the Executive Council leading to the appointment of Shri Satyendra Prasanno Sinha as the first Indian member.
27. The Government of India Act 1909 increased the number of members of the Indian Legislative Council from 16 to 60. Elected members were to be returned by constituencies, such as municipalities, district and local boards, universities, chambers of commerce and trade associations and groups of persons such as land-holders or tea planters.
28. The Act of 1909 created non-official majority in all the Provincial Legislative Councils, but maintained official majority in the Central Legislative Council.

The constituencies were small, the largest of them comprising only 650 persons. Out of 27 elected members in the Central Council, only 9 were supposed to represent the people of India as a whole. It is this Act which regrettably introduced for the first time the principle of communal representation in India and created separate electorates.

29. The 1909 Act also for the first time gave members of the Council power to move resolutions on any matter of general public interest and to divide the Council upon them. This was the beginning of non-official resolutions. The first resolution under the rules was moved on 25 February 1910 by Gopal Krishna Gokhale recommending prohibition of indentured labour for Natal in South Africa. On the Rowlatt Bill, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya spoke for two and a half hours. Similarly, on Indemnity Bill he spoke for four hours continuously and in all, he spent six and a half hours speaking on the Bill. It was very rare that non-official members could have their way. Still, they made their presence felt by moving amendments, resolutions and asking questions.
30. The Rules of the Council framed in 1909 also enlarged the scope of discussion on the Budget. The Budget was considered in two stages. The presentation of a preliminary budget called the financial statement was followed by a general discussion. Some items of expenditure such as that of the Army were however treated as non votable.
31. The right to put questions for seeking information from the government was provided in 1892 but right to ask supplementary questions was not conceded until 1909. Though non-official members were in no position to defeat government measures in the Council, they took question procedure very seriously. While in 1911 only 151 questions were put and answered, the number rose to 397 by the year 1919.
32. Two Bills, the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Bill and the Indian Criminal Law Emergency Powers Bill, commonly called the Rowlatt Bills were introduced in the Council in February 1919 with a view to give extensive powers to the government to put down revolutionary nationalist movements. These were met with bitter and prolonged opposition both inside and outside the Legislature. Debate went on for eight hours extending over two days in which as many as 20 non official members took part. The Indian members opposed the Bill not only at the introduction stage but at every stage.
33. During the course of the passage of the Bill, the Council was divided 16 times. On all occasions, Indian members voted solidly together. Some

members such as Malaviya and Sukul resigned their membership of the Council in protest.

34. The Government of India Act 1919 introduced the system of 'dyarchy' in eight major Provinces known as Governors Provinces. This system established a dual form of government in each province. Control of some areas of government called the "transferred list", were given to a Government of Indian ministers answerable to the Provincial Council. At the same time, all other areas of government (the 'reserved list') remained under the control of the Viceroy. The 'reserved list' included Defence, the Foreign Affairs and Communications. The 'transferred list' included agriculture, supervision of local government, Health and Education.
35. Under the 1919 Act, the Imperial Legislative Council was enlarged and a bicameral legislature introduced. The lower house was the Legislative Assembly of 144 members, of which 104 were elected and 40 were nominated with tenure of three years. The upper house was the Council of States consisting of 34 elected and 26 nominated members and tenure of five years. The 1919 Act also provided for classification of subjects of administration as Central and Provincial and for the devolution of authority in respect of provincial subjects to local governments; and for the allocation of revenues and other moneys to those governments.
36. I have mentioned earlier the role and contribution of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. This address will be incomplete without a special mention of 'Swarajists' like S. Satyamurti, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pandit Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Srinivasa Sastry etc. These leaders disagreed with the Congress policy of non-cooperation with the Government on the matter of entry into the Council. They believed that work within the legislatures could be an equally effective instrument for furthering the nationalist cause. It could highlight the deficiencies of alien rule and at the same time, demonstrate to the British our ability to master the nuances of the parliamentary system.
37. S. Satyamurti, a lawyer and outstanding orator, entered the Madras Legislative Council in 1923 and his fame as a legislator spread all over the country. He excelled himself in the question hour and became a master of the art of interpellation. He was known as the 'terror of the question hour'. His brilliant and effective speeches earned him the name "Trumpet Voice". When the time came for elections to the Madras Legislative Council, Gandhiji declared that it was enough if one Satyamurti was sent to the Legislatures. Shri Satyamurti was member of the Central Legislative Assembly from 1935 to 1939 where his success as a legislator led Gandhiji



to remark that if there had been ten Satyamurtis in our legislatures, the British would have quit long ago.

38. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru broke openly with the Congress after the ascent of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated non-violent civil disobedience against British rule. Sir Sapru was opposed by those who considered the legislatures to be unrepresentative "rubber stamps" for the Viceroy. However, many Congress politicians respected Sir Sapru as an eminent jurist. His ties with the British made him valuable as a mediator and Sir Sapru mediated between Gandhi and the Viceroy Lord Irwin, helping to forge the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Sir Sapru also mediated between Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the British over the issue of separate electorates which was settled by the Poona Pact. Sir Sapru was chosen as the representative of Indian Liberals at the Round Table Conferences of 1931-1933. His last prominent role was as one of the main lawyers engaged to defend captured soldiers of the Indian National Army.
39. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das as leader of the Swarajya Party in Bengal Council assisted by H.S. Suhrawardy, Kiran Sankar Roy, Tulsi Goswami etc. shook the foundation of the British rule with his oratory and parliamentary skill. At the same time, Pandit Motilal Nehru as leader of the Swarajya Party in Central Council laid the basic foundation of constitutional government in India. Both Motilal and Chittaranjan were able to keep the Muslims with the Swarajya Party to project a united India.
40. The 1919 Act was followed by the enactment of the Government of India Act, 1935 which introduced federal features and provincial autonomy in the system and also made provisions for the distribution of legislative powers between the Centre and the provinces. The **Government of India Act, 1935** which, among others, envisaged a 'federation of all-India', consisting of the British provinces and the Indian states willing to join it. Till the Round Table Conference of 1930, India was a completely unitary state and whatever powers the Provinces had were given to them by the Centre. That is, the Provinces were only agents of the Centre. The 1935 Act for the first time provided for a federal system which would consist of not only the Governors' Provinces of British India but also the Chief Commissioners' provinces and the princely states. It finally sought to break up the unitary system under which British India had hitherto been administered. The principle of the constitution of 1919 had been decentralization rather than federation. Under the new Act the Provinces were for the first time recognized in law as separate entities, exercising executive and legislative powers in their own field, in their own right, free in normal circumstances from Central control, in that field. However, even after the enactment of the

Government of India Act, 1935, the constitution of the Central Government in India, by and large, remained what it was under the Act of 1919. The federal part of the 1935 Act never came into operation.

41. The Constituent Assembly, the first representative body of the people of India, commenced its momentous task on 9 December 1946. The members of the Constituent Assembly were chosen through indirect election by the members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 enacted by the British Parliament declared the Constituent Assembly to be a fully sovereign body and the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of States ceased to exist from 14 August 1947. With the dawn of our Independence on the midnight of 14-15 August 1947, the Constituent Assembly assumed full powers and took over as the Legislative Assembly of Independent India. The two functions of the Constituent Assembly, that is Constitution-making and Legislation, were clearly separated and the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) commenced functioning from 17 November 1947.
42. The Constituent Assembly, with Dr. Rajendra Prasad as its President and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, held intensive deliberations in the Central Hall of Parliament House for a long period of 2 years, 11 months and 17 days spread over eleven Sessions and gave an outstanding parchment, an ideal for a resurgent India. Thereafter, the Constitution was adopted by *We, the People of India*, on 26 November 1949 and the members of the Constituent Assembly appended their signatures to it on 24 January 1950. The Constitution which came into force on 26 January 1950 had 395 Articles and 8 Schedules and the distinction of being the lengthiest Constitution in the world. Immediately before the commencement of the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly became the Provisional Parliament of India and functioned as such until the first General Elections based on adult franchise were held in 1952. Ever since, the nation has been guided by the ennobling ideals laid down in the Constitution which has turned out to be one of the finest republican Constitutions.
43. Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
  
I have expounded in such great detail the history of representative Government for a specific purpose. It is to underline the fact that if prominent legislators of pre-independence days with limited powers, could have done so much, how much more can be done by our MPs, MLAs and MLCs of today.

44. Our modern day legislators must recognize that the Constitution of India places our Parliament and Assemblies at the centre of governance and conceives them as the primary instrument of good governance and socio-economic change. The job of a legislator is a 24x7 responsibility. Legislators must at all times be sensitive and responsive to the problems and concerns of the people. They must give voice to the grievances of the public by raising them on the floor of the Legislature and act as the link between the people and the Government.
45. Legislation is the first and foremost responsibility of a Parliamentarian. It is most unfortunate that time devoted towards legislation has been gradually declining in our Parliament. To illustrate, the first Lok Sabha from 1952-57 had 677 sittings in which 319 bills were passed. In comparison, the fourteenth Lok Sabha from 2004-2009 had 332 sittings and passed just 247 bills. The fifteenth Lok Sabha had 357 sittings and passed 181 bills while the sixteenth Lok Sabha has had 197 sittings and passed only 111 bills (upto the 10<sup>th</sup> session).
46. Figures are available for the time lost due to interruptions/adjournments from the Tenth Lok Sabha (1991-96) onwards. 9.95% of total time was lost due to interruptions in the Tenth Lok Sabha, 5.28% in the Eleventh Lok Sabha, 11.93% in the Twelfth Lok Sabha, 18.95% in the Thirteenth Lok Sabha, 19.58% in the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, a shocking 41.6% in the Fifteenth Lok Sabha and about 16% in the Sixteenth Lok Sabha (upto the 10<sup>th</sup> session).
47. Presiding Officers Conferences have time and again reiterated the need for holding a minimum of 100 days of sittings every year. With the heightened complexity of administration, legislation must be preceded by adequate discussion and scrutiny, if not, it will fail to deliver the desired results or meet its objectives. There is need for collective thinking by political parties and leaders of our country on how to ensure smooth running of our Parliament and Legislative Assemblies.
48. At independence, India was faced with apparently insurmountable challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, ethnic and linguistic diversity, diverse castes and classes and the rural base of the economy all of which militated against India's democratic transition. The odds were stacked high against its political consolidation as civil strife on grounds of religious identity tore society apart at Partition. But, our critics have been proved completely wrong.
49. Today, India has a vigorously free press, a robust system of political parties, an independent and active judiciary, an apolitical military and a

thriving civil society. Its democracy has an array of institutions such as an effective Election Commission, an autonomous Union Public Service Commission, a proactive watchdog of public accounts in the Comptroller and Auditor General, an independent National Human Rights Commission, to name but a few. The institutional efficacy of these democratic institutions is beyond doubt.

50. India's democratic transition was a courageous leap for a country that was emerging from colonial rule. It was an audacious decision of India's leaders to adopt a constitution that enshrines liberal democracy as the guiding principle for its polity in one masterly stroke, while democracy evolved in a gradual manner over a long period in the older democratic states in the West. India's democratic transition and consolidation owes much to the dominant legacy of the national freedom movement. Men and women, in millions, rose to the nationalist call and took active part in the mass movement. India has not only sustained its democracy but is today the world's largest democracy and a thriving one.
51. India's parliamentary democracy is safeguarded by the zeal of the Indian people for democracy. Our people have through their overwhelming and enthusiastic participation in 16 General Elections given the seal of approval for our political system. In the last general elections in 2014, nearly 66.3 percent of the 84.3 crore plus electors voted to choose 543 representatives to the Lok Sabha.
52. India's institutions of democratic governance are hailed across the developing world as a model political system, just as India's hugely multi-cultural society is seen as a beacon light for those transitional societies, which are struggling to cope with complexities of race, religion, language and culture. Today, the developing world looks up to India with admiration and rightly so, as India successfully treads the difficult path of democratic governance with a billion-plus people.
53. Despite the successful working of our parliamentary democracy, many people still live under conditions of poverty, deprivation and illiteracy. A substantial section of our society still remains untouched by the lofty ideals and objectives of our governance. It is only when we succeed in making a positive impact upon the lives of those sections of people, can we claim that the democratic system of governance we adopted has become relevant for all our people.
54. The challenge before us is to realize the guiding principle of Indian democracy as envisioned by our Father of Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, namely, "It is one where the weakest should have the same opportunity as

the strongest.” Democracy should provide for an enabling environment which helps every section of the society to fully participate in the process of governance.

55. In conclusion, I congratulate the organisers for putting together this event. I request the State Government of Rajasthan Government to do its best to carry forward the life, beliefs, memories and legacy of Shri Shekhawat.

Thank you, Jai Hind.