

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF 'CONSTITUTION DAY'**

New Delhi, November 26, 2019

Honorable Members of Parliament,

1. I convey my warm greetings on the occasion of 70th anniversary of the adoption of the 'Constitution of India', to all of you, and to all our fellow citizens in India and abroad.
2. It was 70 years ago, on this very day, that in this Central Hall itself, through the members of the Constituent Assembly, we the people of India adopted, enacted and gave to ourselves this constitution.
3. It was in 2015, the 125th birth anniversary year of Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar that the Government of India decided to celebrate November 26, as 'Constitution Day' every year. This is a commendable initiative to reiterate our gratitude to the chief architect of our Constitution. This is, for the first time that we are celebrating the 'Constitution Day' in the Central Hall, with the participation of members of both Houses of Parliament. It is a privilege for all of us to witness and participate in this historic event.
4. By their sheer wisdom, prudence, foresight and diligence, the makers of our Constitution, prepared a futuristic and vibrant document that reflects our ideals and aspirations on the one hand, and protects the future of all Indians on the other. The 'Constitution of India' lies at the foundation of the world's largest democracy. This is the supreme law in the country's democratic framework and it continuously guides us in our endeavors. The Constitution is also the fountainhead of our democratic system of governance and our guiding light.

5. We Indians have had a tradition of maintaining our Indian identity while also welcoming noble ideas emanating from all the sources. This cultural ethos also finds its reflection in the making of our Constitution. We have adopted the best practices from several other Constitutions of other countries. In addition, the imprint of our age-old values and the ideals from our freedom struggle can also be seen in our Constitution. Our Constitution is of the people of India, by the people of India, and for the people of India. It is a national document whose different facets also reflect the democratic systems prevalent in our ancient Assemblies and Sabhas, Lichchhavis and other ancient Indian republics and the Buddhist Sanghas.
6. Under the extraordinary chairmanship of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the constituent assembly accomplished the exceptional feat of blending and balancing different ideas and ideologies. The drafting committee of the Constituent Assembly, under the chairmanship of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, displayed unparalleled prudence, honesty, grit and diligence and gave final shape to the Constitution. Our democracy finds its resonance in our Constitution. To ensure that the Constitution remains relevant over time, the makers of the Constitution also incorporated provisions allowing future generations to make necessary amendments as may be deemed necessary.
7. Indian democracy is duly regarded and respected all over the world. This year, the people of India, participated in the 17th General Election and accomplished the largest democratic exercise in the world. Over 610 million people cast their vote in this election. The participation of women voters was almost equal to that of men. The election of 78 women members to 17th Lok Sabha, being the highest number of women members ever elected to this house, is a glorious achievement for our democracy. Today, all the members of the Standing Committee of Parliament on Empowerment of Women are women. This signifies an important social and political change reflective of a bright future.

8. The people of our country deserve to be complimented for the value and respect that the Indian Constitution has earned over the last 70 years. Likewise, the three organs of the Union and State Governments, i.e., the legislature, the executive and the judiciary deserve to be complimented for the same. Strengthening the relationship and synergy between the Union and States, our journey towards 'Co-operative Federalism' is a living example of the dynamism of our Constitution.
9. While delivering his last speech in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, Dr. Ambedkar had said that the success of the Constitution would depend upon the conduct of the people of India and the political parties. The illustrious makers of our Constitution had with complete devotion and honesty, envisioned to serve and work conscientiously while remaining free from fear or favour, affection or ill-will and bias. They would have been confident that their future generations, that is, all of us, will adopt these values with the same spontaneity and integrity, as they, themselves, did. I think, in the present times, we all need to introspect and reflect upon this.

Honorable members of Parliament,

10. In one of his speeches to the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Ambedkar while underlining the importance of 'Constitutional Morality' emphasised that the essence of 'Constitutional Morality' was to regard the Constitution as supreme and to follow the constitutionally mandated procedures regardless of any ideological differences. All the three organs of the State, persons gracing the constitutional posts, members of the civil society and common citizens of India are expected to abide by 'Constitutional Morality'.
11. According to our Constitution, it is the duty of every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions; to cherish and follow the noble ideals of our freedom struggle; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women; and to value and preserve the rich heritage

of our culture. The Constitution also mentions other duties of citizens.

12. Mahatma Gandhi, while speaking about rights and duties of people, had said (AND I QUOTE) "The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, right will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp." (UNQUOTE)
13. By incorporating the provisions relating to Fundamental Duties into our Constitution, our Parliament has made it abundantly clear that while being alert about their rights, citizens should also be conscious of their duties. 'Fundamental duties' also remind the people of their moral responsibilities. It can be said that the soul of the Constitution lies in its Preamble, and in the parts pertaining to Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles and Fundamental Duties.
14. Rights and duties are two sides of the same coin. Our Constitution provides the fundamental right to 'freedom of speech and expression' and it also enjoins upon citizens the duty to safeguard public property and to abjure violence. Therefore, if someone misconstrues the meaning of the freedom of speech and expression and is about to damage some public property, then another, who prevents him from indulging in such an act of violence and anarchy will be seen as a dutiful citizen. Therefore, we need to perform our duties and thereby create circumstances which would ensure effective protection of rights.
15. Developing the spirit of humanism is also a fundamental duty of citizens. To serve with compassion towards all, is also inherent in this duty. I would like to mention one Smt. Muktaben Dagli of Gujarat, on whom I had the honour of conferring 'Padmashri' at Rashtrapati Bhavan, this very year. Despite losing her eyesight in her childhood, she devoted her whole life to the welfare of others. She has brightened the lives of many visually impaired girls. Through her organization, she

has been instilling the light of hope in the lives of numerous blind women from many states of India. Citizens like her truly uphold the ideals of our Constitution. They deserve to be called nation-builders.

16. As Members of Parliament, you have taken an oath to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established and to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India. As the President of India, I too have taken an oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law to the best of my ability and devote myself to the service and well-being of the people of India. We all need to be always mindful of our oath and affirmation.
17. Citizens and voters of India expect their representatives to work to solve issues related to their welfare. Most people never get to meet their own Members of Parliament. But they regard you as the guardians of their hopes and aspirations. In deference to this trust and faith, serving the people should be our foremost priority. It is indeed a great fortune to enter this holy temple of democracy and get an opportunity to serve the people of India.
18. The most important objective and ideal presented to us by the Constitution is – to secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political and EQUALITY of status and of opportunity. It is only because the Constitution makers ensured equality of opportunity that I have this opportunity to address this historic sitting of Parliament as the President of India.
19. Our Constitution enshrines the ideal of building an inclusive society and also contains provisions for realizing it. Today is a great opportunity to convey our gratitude to the makers of our Constitution who gave us a system to bring about revolutionary changes peacefully by way of constitutional amendments. All Members of Parliament

deserve appreciation for the several constitutional amendments passed during the last few years.

20. In our country, constitutional avenues are available to address all kinds of situations that we may face. Therefore, whatever we do, we must first ponder whether our action is in conformity with constitutional boundaries, dignity and morality? I am sure that, being mindful of this constitutional touchstone and consistent with our constitutional ideals, we will earn for India its rightful place in the world as an ideal democracy. Let us resolve that we, the people of India, will continuously strive to achieve the ideals of our Constitution and realize the dreams of millions of our fellow citizens.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!