

EVOLUTION OF A HAPPY SOCIETY

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I am delighted to address and interact with students on the occasion of the 3rd Informal Discussion Group ('IDG') session organized by the National University of Juridical Sciences ('NUJS'), Kolkata, one of the most prestigious law schools of the country. My greetings to the organizers, participants, students, faculty members and other distinguished guests. My greetings and congratulations to the past and present leadership which has built a robust framework for legal education.

While the country is moving towards realizing the goal of achieving the vision of a developed India by 2020, there are still many challenges to be met for accelerating the progress and realizing the goal within nine years. Since I am amidst students and patrons of law, I will discuss the relationship between the importance of building a society with dignity of life and national economic development which will result in people living in a clean and green environment without pollution, having prosperity without poverty, peace without fear of war and a happy place to live for all citizens of the nation. In this context, let me share with you a few thoughts on the topic 'Evolution of A Happy Society'.

I. MAJESTY OF LAW AND JUSTICE

Every citizen in the country has a right to live with dignity; every citizen has a right to aspire for distinction. The availability of a large number of opportunities which one can resort to with just and fair means in order to attain that dignity and distinction is what democracy is all about. That is what our Constitution is all about, and that is what makes life wholesome and worth living in a true and vibrant democracy.

At this point, I would like to suggest that at social levels it is necessary to work for unity of minds. The increasing intolerance for views of others and increasing contempt about the ways of life of others or their religions or the expressions of these differences through lawless violence against people cannot be justified in any context. All of us have to work hard and do everything to make our behaviour civilized so as to protect the rights of every individual. This is the very foundation of the democratic values, which I believe, are our civilizational heritage and the very soul of our nation. In the judicial

* 11th President of India. This address was given at the 3rd Informal Discussion Group session at NUJS on July 5, 2011.

system, you will witness these societal dynamics. The experience gained from these situations can definitely create anxiety and there is even a possibility of judicial solutions.

II. SOCIETAL INEQUALITIES

What we have to fight today, according to me, are the social and economic inequalities faced by a part of our population in various aspects of life. India's movement in removing this inequality should set a trend for the whole world to follow. Hence the important question is, when India gets transformed into an economically developed nation by 2020, will we be able to ensure dignity to every citizen of the country? How do we ensure dignity of human life? So far, I have met over 12 million youths, visited more than 25 states a number of times, visited a number of countries and met the Indian community there. Based on my interaction with the people from different walks of life after my presidency, I have come across a number of social rights issues. I have pondered upon these issues and looked for a common solution. I was thinking for a long time. This has raised certain questions in my mind. How do we find a solution for these questions jointly? Let me discuss the questions first.

1. Can we totally eradicate poverty and build capacities in everyone, irrespective of caste, creed, religion or status?
2. Can we eliminate human scavenging, rag picking and rehabilitate all street children, child labourers and destitute women?
3. Can we ensure nobility and justice to every citizen; is it indeed the mission of NUJS?
4. Can we give a dignified life to leprosy treated patients and AIDS patients?
5. Can we provide for a dignified and secured living for senior citizens and differently-abled people?
6. Can we treat tribal citizens as our own in all our actions?
7. Can we ensure dignity to primary school teachers, farmers, farm workers and rural craftsmen?
8. Can we make the system of governance transparent and use it for uplifting the quality of life of people by empowering the people to choose the right leaders?

We have the mission of uplifting 400 million people who are living below the poverty line. The entire development effort should focus towards uplifting them and enabling them with the capacity to lead a good quality of life. Hence, all our development efforts should make them partners. This can be organized as a mission of removing poverty and bringing smiles to the billion people through economic growth with national integrity. Then alone can we bring about inclusive development in the nation. That is why we need leaders with compassion and integrity to bring smiles to the faces of the one billion people of India. Can the students and faculty members of NUJS debate, discuss and arrive at practical solutions as a part of IDG recommendations? These recommendations should be placed on the website under the heading “Results of IDG discussion of NUJS in the month of -- and the year of --.”

Now let me discuss the economic development scenario in India.

III. DEVELOPMENTAL POLITICS

When I addressed the Parliament, I defined politics. In politics there are two dimensions, the first one is ‘political politics’ and the other is ‘developmental politics’. Political politics is required during the election process. Immediately after the elections, however, all parties must converge on developmental politics with a common national mission. Nowadays, we are witnessing that development politics has gained importance among the people. People continue to elect parties who work for developmental politics and dislodge governments which are not performing. All parties have to work with zeal, understanding the overall mood of the nation to uplift the 400 million people living below the poverty line and remove illiteracy and unemployment. I would like to visualize a situation in which political parties perform in an environment of developmental politics, competing with each other, in putting forth their focused developmental vision through their manifestos. What we need in our country is a political system that functions on 30 percent of political politics and 70 percent developmental politics. I am sure the judicial system will assist in the growth of developmental politics in the country. I would like to hear views from others, particularly of the IDG. Now let me share with you what type of nation will emerge by 2020.

IV. DISTINCTIVE PROFILE OF INDIA 2020

I visualize a distinctive profile of India well before the year 2020 (in 9 years time) with the following characteristics:

1. A nation where the rural-urban divide has been reduced to a thin line.

2. A nation where there is equitable distribution of and adequate access to energy and quality water.
3. A nation where agriculture, industry and the service sector work together in symphony.
4. A nation where education, with value systems, is not denied to any meritorious candidate because of societal or economic discrimination.
5. A nation, which is the best destination for the most talented scholars, scientists, and investors.
6. A nation where the best of health care is available to all.
7. A nation where governance is responsive, transparent and corruption-free.
8. A nation where citizens feel that the judiciary is most dependable and people friendly. Lawyers, judges and the judicial administrative system have to work together to combat the problem of pendency of cases before courts.
9. A nation where poverty has been totally eradicated, illiteracy removed; and crimes against women and children are absent; and no one in society feels alienated.
10. A nation that is prosperous, healthy, secure, devoid of terrorism, peaceful and happy and continues with a sustainable growth path.
11. A nation that is one of the best places to live in and is proud of its leadership.

V. INTEGRATED ACTION FOR DEVELOPED INDIA

We have a mission before us- to achieve this distinctive profile and transform India into a developed nation. I have identified five areas where India has a core competence for integrated action: (1) agriculture and food processing; (2) education and healthcare; (3) information and communication technology; (4) infrastructure, reliable and quality electric power, surface transport and infrastructure for all parts of the country; and (5) self-reliance in critical technologies. These five areas are closely inter-related and if advanced in a coordinated way, will lead to food, economic and national security. Students and faculty members of law institutes have an important mission to contribute

towards every one of the eleven pillars of the Development Mission, 2020. Let me give an example.

VI. PURA (PROVISION OF URBAN AMENITIES IN RURAL AREAS)

Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Area (PURA) converges physical, electronic and knowledge resources for the development of rural infrastructure and ushering in prosperity and economic connectivity. The number of PURA missions for the whole country is estimated to be 7,000. Educational institutions can participate in evolving a roadmap for the development of PURAs in their region. The Central Government has recently announced the PURA programme in 10 identified clusters in the country. This has been done with the aid of public-private partnerships at an estimated cost of Rs. 120 crores each from gap funding from the Central Government. There are many such private initiatives which are operating successfully in many parts of the country. Many state governments are now adopting this PURA model for bringing sustainable economic development in the rural areas. Economic development alone is not sufficient. Moral values coming out of civilizational heritage are required to be built among the citizens from the teachings coming from multiple spiritual writings to work with integrity and succeed with integrity. Vision 2020 has seen many success stories, yet there are many challenges knocking on our door. We need to focus on many things which need coordinated attention by the Government, political parties, the judiciary, public and private industries, NGOs, civil society and all the other stakeholders in the nation-building process. Students and faculty members of NUJS can facilitate the creation of NUJS PURA complexes in the rural districts of West Bengal and other parts of the country. Now let me present the current ambience of the nation.

VII. CURRENT AMBIENCE

In 2008-09, when the recession affected the global economy, and many national economies saw unprecedented depression periods, the Indian economy, with its right mix of conservatism and openness was able to grow at 6.5 percent. This growth rate went up to 8 percent in 2011. This robustness will continue as much of India's demand for industrial produce comes from its 200 million households backed by the increasing purchasing power of the middle class society.

I do see signs of rejuvenation, particularly in the agricultural and rural sectors, as well as in small and medium scale industries and enterprises. Of course in an evolving democracy, such innovative processes give rise to many debates and actions on interesting possibilities of public-private-citizen partnerships and international partnerships.

India's performance in the IT sector, pharmaceuticals, small scale industries and infrastructure has brought a new dimension to the Indian economy and its role in the international arena. With an established legal framework in place, its robust banking system, its dynamic financial system, its skilled manpower and dynamic 600 million youth, India has become an attractive proposition for the world order. Many of the present and foresighted establishment like the IITs, IIMs, technological laboratories, law institutes, mission programmes like those in agriculture, defence and the recent initiatives in IT, biotechnology are yielding dividends. I see that Indian models for equitable and quality health care can provide good models for the world. Infrastructural development is an area where the ascent has been intensified and there have been good developments in railways, high ways and metro transport systems.

In essence, at the domestic level, India is focusing on bringing sustainable development through rural and urban infrastructure, quality education, healthcare, environmental upgradation, bringing vibrancy in the public institutions for better and enhanced delivery of essential public services on time, reforming the financial system for better global integration and a proactive regulatory system. Success in these areas is critical to India becoming a global player. There is a realization both, within and outside the country, of India's role in bringing about a new world order and its role in increased international collaborations for its development. Of course in the modern world such interdependence between nations for their own benefit as well as for world welfare as a whole is well recognised. There are many challenges to be faced. With a vibrant media, energetic youth and emerging citizen awareness, more and more aspects of governance are discussed. Six decades of democratic vibrancy has provided inspired leadership to one billion people of a multicultural, multi-lingual nation and the confidence to manage to its intricate socio-economic issues.

VIII. SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

But at the same time, there are many challenges; we are witnessing repeated attempts of corruption at all levels, a fluctuating rate of inflation and continuously rising fuel prices due to the increase in crude oil prices. In addition to this, farmers are not getting the right price for their produce, government services are not reaching citizens at the right time, school and higher education is facing a challenge of quality, higher cost and slow-pace of research; and development activities, quality healthcare is yet to reach the needy in many states. Also, relations with neighbouring countries are stressed. Pollution is another problem. Environmental degradation due to climate change is also a challenge that requires solutions to accelerate the rate of development of India's 2020 missions. Let us now discuss the engines for growth.

IX. ENGINES FOR GROWTH

The emphasis in our societal transformation is on the full utilization of our natural and human resources to meet the demands of the modern society. These natural resources include management of water, minerals and materials, multiple agro-climatic conditions and a rich bio-diversity. India is also attempting to fully utilize the 540 million youth by empowering them with quality education, vocational skills and value added employment in the agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors.

Technology is the non-linear tool available to humanity, which can bring about fundamental changes on the ground rules of economic competitiveness. Science is linked to technology through applications. Technology is linked to economy and environment through manufacture. Economy and environment are linked to technology and it promotes prosperity in society. We have achieved a global competitive index of 48 through the application of technology. We realize that if we have to become the frontrunner in the competitiveness index, we should channelize our energy into the application of basic sciences.

X. CONCLUSION: THE “WHAT CAN I GIVE MISSION?”

Friends, finally let me now discuss a very important area which is significant to our quest in evolving an economically developed nation by 2020. Of course, we are making significant progress in all directions. We, however, also have many challenges to overcome. They include corruption and moral turpitude in the nation, environmental degradation and the need to build a compassionate society. These are evils which need to be defeated by the goodness of the citizens. Where do such evils arise from? They arise from the never ending greed of “What can I take?” The fight for a corruption-free and ethical society and a good environment will hence have to target this greed and replace the “What can I take?” attitude with the spirit of “What Can I Give?” If we inculcate the spirit of “What Can I Give?”, it would not only be our strength in overcoming moral degradation, but also ensure a society which is compassionate and environmentally conscious. As citizens, we need to ask ourselves one question- What Can I Give? Let me give some examples.

1. Can I be an environmental giver, thereby creating a clean environment and conserving the planet and its habitat from degradation? Today we can decide, each one of us will plant five trees and nurture them.
2. Can I be a caregiver, by providing care to those who are needy, to those who are sick and to those who are lonely in their pains? Visit a hospital

and give happiness to the patients who are not visited by any other relative. You can offer flowers, fruits and cheerfulness.

3. Can I be a smile giver, and serve citizens to the best of my ability and ensure they leave with a smile? Every one of us can take an oath; today I will make my mother happy. When mother is happy, home is happy. If home is happy, society is happy. If society is happy, nation is happy).
4. Can I be a good governance giver, thereby ensuring that the highest ethical standards are maintained in all my work and that I work with integrity and succeed with integrity? Can I spread the message of “we will work with integrity and succeed with integrity”?

Friends, let me now put-forth a unique mission in which I would like every member present here to take active part. It is a called “THE WHAT CAN I GIVE” movement. I am propagating this movement especially for the young students, young officers, young legislators and youth of the nation which is also applicable to all the members of the Indian community assembled here. ‘What Can I Give?’ is a mission to generate great citizens with ethics and great families with value system. Such an approach by the youth of the nation will not only promote harmonious living but also create an environment of trust and compassion among people of different religions and cultures living in this country.

My best wishes to all the students of NUJS and I wish them success in their mission of developing quality human resource in the legal system which is very vital for accelerating the process of societal transformation.

May God bless you.