

ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS IN DEMOCRACY

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Speech delivered by Dr. M. Channa Reddy, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh at the Rotarians Club, Hyderabad on January 25, 1990.

ROLE INTELLECTUALS IN DEMOCRACY

Ladies and Gentlemen!

At the outset, I must apologize for the delay in my coming over here as I had to attend the inaugural function of the daily Krishna Pathrika along with the Governor. I must also acknowledge with grateful thanks the consideration shown to me in asking me to be an honorary member of the Rotarian Fraternity. In fact, I have been a Rotary Member for the 25 years. It was in Hyderabad that I had become an honorary member. From then, on and off, in various States and various Districts, I have been given this distinction and honour. Yet I acknowledge gratefully this distinction and honour. Yet, I acknowledge gratefully this particular honour on the eve of the Republic Day. Rotarians of Hyderabad and Secunderabad have always been celebrating a joint function of this type. Earlier, I had occasion to speak to them at similar meetings. But, as the President has rightly stated, this is the first time after I became the chief Minister, that I was asked to attend this function to which I readily agreed. Your President has been very democratic. He offered to have Corrections sung in a most democratic manner, though the Rotarians appeared to be unprepared to sing. Your President made a speech, and he covered a large number of events, of the record of the service that your organization has rendered in the Twin cities and also in the State for the last several years. It is true that I was not associated with the founding ceremony of the Rotarians in 1948. But, directly and indirectly I was very much associated with and always felt quite at home with the Rotarians and the philosophy and approach of the Rotarians.

“Rotarian” is a movement, a philosophy. It is not merely occasional ceremonial meetings, but a philosophy of day-to-day life and your attitude to the society as a whole.

Human beings have a special characteristic. Some of them might express it and some of them may not. But all of them have the awareness of their human environs. And every moment, one would make an attempt to see what one can do for the others. That gives a tremendous amount of satisfaction. Service is not a monopoly of any political or other organization. In fact, it is an inherent quality in human-beings. Imagine, a very conservative type of person walking in the street. When he comes across a handicapped person who needs guidance, say a blind man going about, he would lend his hand of support and in so doing, you don't know how much satisfaction he derives. We do not do service just for the sake of service or only to help others. We do so, to strengthen confidence in ourselves and to help ourselves and also to derive that satisfaction for which a human being craves, to display the capacity to help others.

Rotary, therefore, is a great movement and it has acquired an international character, and along with some other organizations of this type like Lions club etc., it has done yeomen service at international level. It is a matter of proud satisfaction to the members. Proudly we share this platform, in a disciplined way. The members make an effort to meet once a week regularly. I know of people who even when they visit other cities or towns or even other countries make it a point to attend the function of the clubs, on the days allotted in those areas. That gives them again a satisfaction, because a Rotarian cannot afford to be either in disciplined or indifferent, either negligent or unconcerned with things that are happening around him. The organization builds up this discipline. There is general talk that this meant mainly for people of means, who meet once a week as almost a hobby. Even then, it gives great justification for people to get together instead of wasting their time in a purposeless manner. Organizations of this type create an atmosphere which kindles the spirit of service.

Republic Day is of great importance. You must have observed in any gathering when the National Anthem is sung or when vanned Mathuram is sung, people stand with respect with feelings of patriotism, love of Independence and a sense of great responsibility. We do the same when we listen a religious prayer; equally important it is, but yet we take a different attitude, that the significance is recalled. The very word ' Republic' reminds us, that, we have pledged to serve our country—a country which attained Independence after a great and hard struggle and in a very unprecedented manner, greatly master-minded by the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. He told the world and the humanity that it is great to die for others instead of killing others. This ideal inspires us. With all the vicissitudes of life, social and political, for 42 years we have maintained a stable democracy, whether this party comes into power or the other party. Democracy and political power are not sustained merely by political parties. Democracy is sustained by the people. In India, with all the difficulties and limitations imposed by poverty and illiteracy, we have great faith in democracy.

Democracy as is usually misunderstood is not a ritual once in five years when we go to elections. Elections are important and have their own significant role. They only change political parties. It is only incidental. More important is the attitude of the individual in a democracy. In what way he lives and thinks, in what way he treats the other people and views the problems of others, in what way he can think collectively and assumes collective responsibility of the family, the village, the place he lives in and the country as a whole. That is democracy. We think that in every human being there is an element of divinity, ' DAIVAMSA' and that is of the greatest democratic significance. Even the most wretched man has 'DAIVAMSA', a man with whom you differ violently also has 'DAIVAMSA'. All of us

are creatures of God and every action of ours is controlled and directed by what we consider as God, a personification of the sublime, divine idea and belief. There is some force, some strong element, a central point of all religions and of all individuals, and that makes us think that there is a force that guides us. We are human beings and merely instruments in the hands of God, that supreme idea or belief. That is how that feeling is there. We are quite equipped for a democratic approach to life. In spite of difficulties, we are still surviving in a stable democracy.

Things happen for good or bad. I do not mean to talk or associate with the feelings that were expressed by the Rotarian President about the past regime. I know he was more than right but all the same, it is not so. There is something more. I only pity such people and such parties with limited, circumscribed views. They are un-natural. When we do not have freedom, when we cannot allow the people around us to express freely, it is not the other people that get suffocated but the suffocates get suffocated and ultimately get annihilated. That is the democratic way. I happen to be on this platform and let not people misunderstand that I have any ill feelings towards any one. After all, they played their part. And now we are called upon to play our part. It only means again there is in it all, the will of God and there is some purpose. After all what I do or what you do, what your president does or anybody else does, is prompted by a driving force and we are destined to play our part, whether good or bad. Even a bad character in a drama like Ravana in Ramayana is not something of his own. That is a part of divine scheme because only then the character of Rama is complete, and the story is to be complete. We do all these so that the right character is brought to light in contrast. We always see a thing in contrast. So I think we all have a part to play and in this changed context, it is our good luck that we had a past that was suffocating and therefore we are now able to do a little better. But everything will be judged not merely by circumstances that are created, but by what you and I perform.

In a setup of democracy, as in Rotarians, all the good work that has been done is definitely the outcome of the collective efforts you have made. If in the Rotarians this is the position, then in a country like ours or in a State like ours, it is not few individuals who are thrown up in to some positions of power that can achieve or that are responsible, but all of us are so. We should take the whole society together.

Now we are on the eve of the Republic Day, when the whole country is pulsating with great enthusiasm, with reverence to not merely our freedom but also to the manner we got that freedom. Sometimes we wonder whether this freedom is only for wasting time, for behaving in an irresponsible manner or was it meant for something better. We are reminded on occasions like Republic Day of those thousands and lakhs of people who are offered their lives on the altar of freedom, who went to the gallows at the call of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders. In case we are not in a position to think of it in the midst of our own routine busy life, there are some occasions created in history when we get an opportunity to think about these things and dedicate and rededicate ourselves. Republic Day is one such great moment. We rejoice in it and we celebrate it with all solemnity. We see a variety of interesting programs like processions and parades. But behind all this, there is one thing and that is the purpose for which this freedom was achieved, and the purpose for which we have to work. It is from this point of view Rotarians have a greater role to play.

Rotary is an organization where intellectuals from all walks of life come in, and meet and share their experiences. They think of some projects, from may be distributing sewing machines etc., to some things bigger. I have always been trying to tell the Rotarians, if after Krishna has become big enough and old enough, he still goes about stealing butter and teasing Gopikas, I think he will get a slap. You have reached a stage when you should think of some bigger things. Every human being has an individuality. He desires to donate, he wants to give and he wants to do it personally. That is a temptation to derive satisfaction. But it is for the Rotarian and organizations like this, it is for democracy to make individuals think collectively rather than individually. One might like to give a donation of Rs. 200 but I would say let him donate even Rs. 50/- but add it to the other people's money. When you think of some big projects, may be in a village, may be in a town, may be in a city or even for the whole State plan in a big way, for collective good. That is sharing of individual influence or capacity or prosperity with all. Rotarians have been serving a very important cause and that is a factor which stabilizes democracy. For a feeling of collectiveness a bigger thing must be done and in a collective way. Many individuals feel reluctant to share with others. Rotarian culture, Rotarian Philosophy and democratic philosophy and culture will drive us to this aspect, and make us think many times before we get over this tempting instinct of self satisfaction in human beings. I have been pleading with the Rotarians in Uttar Pradesh, in Punjab, in various other states where I had an occasion to meet them and also in our own State that they should think in terms of collective work and leave small things to such people who are still in that primitive stage of enjoying the advantages individually for their personal grandeur. I would like all the Rotarians to think of starting the best institutes in the country, like a child welfare institute or aquarium or a big hospital or something where people can think that there is the spirit of the Rotarians. Government doing these things does not have that much impact. If you show a Government Hospital and say this is the biggest hospital here, it will not have that impact. If I show a Rotarian Hospital, or a Rotarian Institution created out the toil, munificence and magnanimity of all the individual members in the State or the country, then people look up to it with great inspiration. That is what your movement should build up.

There is one great factor to be reckoned in democracy, the indifference of intellectuals. You keep on talking and criticizing about the situation around you. But what is your contribution? Your intellectual indifference assumes dangerous dimensions. It is time now to talk the robust common sense of the illiterate people and the inherent faith in democracy of the common people as your base, and raise a great and magnificent structure, with your contribution of intellectual excellence.

We have many problems. Now I put it on the eve of the Republic Day some problems which Andhra Pradesh is facing to-day. For instance—you face a problem. You face your individual problems, but how do you view and solve the problems of the State and the Nation? You think that you have nothing to do with them. Then, let me tell you the State will have nothing to do with you. And very rightly and justifiably the State also can be indifferent to you. That is a stage you are passing through, a very critical stage which represents a crisis of intellectual aloofness. No use complaining about it. To-day things can be shaped in a manner in which you like if only you take interest and apply your mind. The former Chief Minister has created many problems for us. We cannot touch a problem, we cannot leave a problem, we cannot go ahead with this problem and there I want all of you intellectuals, organized intellectuals, a responsible sector of the society, to apply your minds with all

seriousness and sincerity. Rotarians will be failing in their duty and in history you will go down as some indifferent section, unconcerned with others unconcerned with the State. Therefore, on the eve of the Republic Day kindly think of the State.

I am more a politician than a Doctor. I believe sincerely in politics which you miss very badly when you criticize that a politician having nothing to stand on his own, probably is depending on others. The politician is swindling money, the public money. That first thing we should create, should be where withal to stand on your own legs, before you think in terms of politics. If you are asked what your profession is, what is the reply? I was asked in 1950, when I was travelling with a military officer. I was at that time a Member of parliament. When I was asked what my profession was, I was really completely floored. I was not mentally prepared for that type of a question. should I say that my profession was politics or my profession is ' Member of Parliament'. Member of Parliament is not a profession. Politics is also not a profession. Politics is an extra area of service. Rotarian is also not your profession. Your profession is something else and among Rotarians you have got a professional basis for admission of the members from the faculty of medicine, faculty of a business faculty of printing and faculty of missionary and what not. Rotarianism is only a philosophy of life or an activity. So also politics. So therefore, one must have one's own profession. When I took up to politics from my 9th year of age, I look upon this as an unpleasant avocation. I thought medical profession would be an independent profession. But very soon I realized that these two could not go together. They are jealous mistresses and therefore if one has to stick to one, one has to sacrifice the other, and so I sacrificed my Medical Profession. Even to-day I can practice. I do not challenge the Medical doctors who are better. But I would not resume medical profession because I will be then failing in my duty to politics. While introducing me Mr. Ranga Rao had said that sometimes I get in and sometimes I get out of politics. In politics there is nothing like getting in and getting out. You are in or you are out, you are seemingly or apparently in or out! One should have the capacity to appear 'seemingly something'. Sometimes you have to become a Rama. Seemingly you become Rama. Sometimes when you appear to be almost quiet or out of it, you are still very much in it waiting for proper time and proper circumstances.

You know once in twelve years you get pushkaras. Each river vally in India celebrates the Pushkara by turns, each river getting to run once in twelve years. In 1978 I became Chief Minister and in 1990 again I became Chief Minister and I wish to assure your president and all of you that in 2002 I am not going to be the Chief Minister. I always doubt as to why this Pushkara cycle is after me! We are told that not even a blade of grass grows without the will of God. If even a blade of grass cannot grow without the will of God, then where is the question of your moving in and out or something becoming something or the other? Therefore, whenever we take up something let us believe that the God has given us this opportunity, and let us do our best. Why talk of God? He is our good guest. When a guest is arriving you keep the house tidy and neat. You consider him important. We consider God as important and in every activity we keep this in mind and try to do our best. We keep ourselves and all that we have neat and clean. You also think and believe that your guest is important. He may not be that important to another person but he is important to you and, therefore, you do all these things.

It might look I am a conservative, but I say this is a matter of rational approach, this amounts to honouring the best in yourself. I think every minute to do my best. This

opportunity is given to me not as a 'Thamasha' but only to put me to a test. That is for future to judge. I don't know how many of you believe in future births or janmas or past janmas, but I believe in them. But let me tell you, the philosophy of life, the historical facts of life in our country and elsewhere are controlled beyond doubt and God gives us these opportunities to put us to test and see how we behave. Man can do or undo according to his likes and there he is judged while an animal can neither do nor undo. It has to eat and nothing more and nothing less. And further, God does not give it marks, but to you and me God gives marks.

We have great problems in Andhra Pradesh. The last Government has thrown out so many challenges. I do not have that capacity to say anything glibly. When I say something I mean it. When I say something I should mean it. And when I say something I want the people to believe it. And I want the people to appreciate it and endorse it. Because I firmly believe that it is not that I am able to do it. It is said about a great administrator that he might appear to be not doing anything for a long time. I may be able to jump to a height of 20 feet very easily, but suppose I cannot take anyone with me and by the time I reach 20 feet I am all alone, then I may not have achieved anything. I must have my strength jump up to 20 feet and in the process I must be able to take people along with me and the more I take with me, all of them may not come to 20 feet and they may come to 18, 17, 16, 15 feet and from there together we will be able to work and achieve good results. That is democracy. It might look that one is quiet but in the process one must be preparing to achieve this.

For example there is the question to-day, what are we going to do with the Naxalites. Am I going to do anything? Do we want to continue what the police has been doing for the last 30 years or even more? Policemen arresting people, keeping them without trial, police excesses and all other kinds of difficulties are there. They are working in one direction and others working in another direction---they are working at cross purposes. A change has to be made. I am throwing out one suggestion after the other and I am clear in my final objective and goal. I am saying daily, no police excess, no injustice in the land affairs no question of arresting people and keeping them in jail without trial. We do not allow them to suffer. Even if they had done something wrong, I am prepared to release them. I want the Rotarians, to become my eyes and ears in this matter. You have to think of these problems and give time to solve them.

In the rural areas, there is reorganization of administration. Mondals have been formed by the previous Government. In fact, in what a great hurry it was done! Any measure should have infrastructure and superstructure. Instead of 350 Taluka Units, there are now 1104 Mandal Units. It has expanded but without a structure or a building or a proper shape, I require at least Rs. 150 crores; and 5 to 6 years to complete those necessary arrangements. Also I cannot withdraw this. Then there is the Buddha Statue, which has been contemplated to merely enter into the Guinness Book of Records. About 6 to 7 crores have been spent on that statue and to transport it cost one and half crores. Now the contractors say it costs us one more crore. Then it requires another 5 to 6 crores to complete. A platform has to be built in the midst of the lake and the statue has to be lifted. To lift the statue, they have commissioned a crane from Holland and it costs one and half crores. It is now lying in the customs office. There were both refundable and non-refundable amounts to be paid. And we cannot pay because we have already 500 crores of loans. We are in a deficit. That is why we have issued the WHITE PAPER but not to malign any one. I am suffering from suffocation--- But all the same I must act because I want to take administration in the right stride as a

challenge. This is an opportunity through which we can show our better elements. If you don't have better elements then, you don't deserve to be here. We are not born as Ministers or Chief Ministers. It is not ancestral property. nor is it a hereditary property. That is the right spirit for a democrat and no question of hanging on to the post. All things happen by the will of God. He creates some people to create troubles. Here are the problems, and what should I do with that Buddha Statue? You forget about Mandals, Buddha is standing before us. Often you go through the tankbund – Those statues are there. There and half crores were spent to widen the road for the statues. Four or five crores were spent on the statues and all this is working out to another 15 crores or so or even more. I feel tempted to sell the whole tank bund road and also the tank with the Buddha. Suppose I can get 200 crores out of any person, then I can spend it usefully on people's programs for the uplift of the weaker sections in our society. But now what should I do? Should I pay them one more crore and forget it? Should I provide for another 5 to 6 crores? If I go back on this people will say Dr. Reddy is behaving in a vengeful manner and he is destroying all that for which so much was spent. I cannot throw away the statue!

Very strange things have happened. Even the ration shops, the officers used to decide upon the ration shops. I don't know why and how but funnily they made a decision that only the Ministers will give the shops in all the villages, 20,000 villages. The Ministers have no other work except distributing shops and the Chief Minister will sit on appeals. What a great deterioration!.

I suggest to your organization, particularly in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. You appoint a joint committee of all the Rotarians and take up this challenge and I would say that I have an asset in the shape of advice from the organized Rotarians. Intellectuals should like to share this, take interest and provide guidance. BY doing so, you will be adding to the happiness of the society as a whole. I want to do a thing which is not only approved by me by all of you or as many as possible. Democracy does not mean either elections in five years or merely the Assembly Sessions and the Parliament Sessions. That is not the whole of democracy. Democracy is sustained by the sustained interest you take even from outside. Ministers in my cabinet myself Legislators and Parliament Members all of us want to rise to your expectations. If we cannot rise to your expectations, and if we go out of office, you are in a position to take charge of this country. But if you are indifferent, when we go out and you also go out, we don't know what will happen.

What is happening in Kashmir? My personal feeling is that nothing short of war can save Kashmir for India. It is a very strong statement that I am making, but I am making it conscious of all that is happening in that part of the country. So also Punjab. What is really happening? Can we afford to be ignorant of and indifferent to all those problems because Hyderabad is safe? The disturbances that are taking place in Srilanka are no less concern to India. Now I am not proposing to criticize the Central Government. I said and my leader Sri Rajiv Gandhi said we will offer constructive criticism and cooperation during the full five years. Though that is a different party, I have nothing to fear about it. There used to be a Government here which day in and day out, morning and evening was talking against and criticizing the Prime Minister in words such as 'baccha' the traitor and what not. I would never say any such words against the Central Ministers and the Prime Minister. I am friendly with all of them Friendly because we are all bound by democratic principles. Otherwise, why should I come to your place? You are all not Congress men. But I do come because we

believe we should develop the social structure and the political reality. I don't mind a change in the party in power. I am quite used to work with the Opposition. I know things will settle down and the Opposition will cooperate. That is the conviction and confidence that I have in the people and their attitude. And, therefore I would say that to meet all of you, the Rotarians of Hyderabad, is a formal invitation that you have given me nor have I accepted it formally.

So I request you to apply your mind to these problems. It will be my effort, this time as Chief Ministers, to see how best and what a wide base that we can create for democracy and the functioning of our Government. I would feel successful when I can feel a confidence that it is not Dr. Reddy's Government but government of each one of you. It is the Government of people and only people are our masters. Incidentally, we belong to some party. But ultimately our masters are the people. You are the representatives of the people and in your own way, you can help us. I will pass on gradually problems after problems and try to see that we all together work for a happy Republic, for a good Republic. It is the befitting way that we celebrate the Republic Day in this manner. I convey to each of you my Republic Day greetings. Incidentally, January is a very potential month. The new year starts, for Andhra's Sankranthi Day comes and for us it is the Republic Day in the month. Also I am born in this month. But it is a potential month that I have come into contact with a great potential organization with representatives of vital sections of the people of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. I wish the President and all the Presidents of different Clubs and the Hon'ble Members all success and hope that you all will play a very useful and substantial part in securing happiness of the society as a whole.

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