

Speech by High Commissioner on the occasion of
Dr.BhimraoAmbedkar's 124th birth anniversary celebration
Tuesday, 14 April 2015

Lord Bhiku Parekh,

Dr. Santosh Das, President, Federation of Ambedkarite and
Buddhist Organisations

Shri JograjAhir, President, Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha

Representatives of all Indian community organisations, friends,

Namaskar, Vanakkam, Sat Sri Akaal, Good day,

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you all today as we celebrate the 124th birth anniversary of Dr.BabasahebAmbedkar. This celebration is particularly significant now when we need to reaffirm the values of our motherland India. During the discussion on Motion of Thanks to the President's address opening the Lok Sabha, our PM referred to some controversies over religious matters, in our country and then said, "The only religious book is the Indian Constitution, and the only prayer is welfare of all".

AmbedkarJayanti is a unique occasion for all of us to proudly celebrate the genius of the father of that one great book which is the foundation of India – the Constitution. Dr.Ambedkar's unparalleled contribution in the framing of our Constitution will always be recognised in the history of India. But we need to recognise also that his vision was 'welfare of all'. He gave the nation a profound social content and challenging social-democratic objectives. Even six decades after its adoption, our Constitution has become the uniting sprit of the country, guiding us through challenging times and unprecedented global and national social and political change. As a former PM said to leaders of a revolution in a country near us – "we did not have a violent Revolution, but through our Constitution we began a

Revolution that continues every day, and in every village and town of India”.

For us abroad, Dr.Ambedkarwords from decades ago are perhaps even more relevant today. “I do not want that our loyalty as Indians should be in the slightest way affected by any competitive loyalty whether that loyalty arises out of our religion, out of our culture or out of language. I want all people to be Indian first, Indian last and nothing else but Indians”.

I do not intend to stand in the way of the main speakers who will convey the message for today. But I need to say why we deem it a privilege to have all of you join the celebrations:

- a) A beacon of hope for the disadvantaged in India as he is described by many, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a staunch opponent of injustice, discrimination and oppression. He faced these evils in his own life and he rose above these evils, to help all who suffer from them. In this regard he stands in the league of great world leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. His impact like theirs, was not, and is not, limited by time and place.

- b) Dr.Ambedkar was also an intellectual giant who did a Ph.D at LSE on The Problem of the Rupee (this was in 1923!). His studies were wide-ranging. In later years he wrote on subjects as diverse as political theory on Pakistan, and in the final stages of his career, on Buddhism. Clearly he understood that building a world of greater justice required a full understanding of how this was to be done. In a sense he anticipated, a great political theorist who said the task of philosophy is not only to understand the world, the task of philosophy is to change the world!

c) For us in India it is time now to unite in ensuring that our constitutional democracy continues its evolving process, and live up to the ideals of its founding fathers – a revolution every day in every village as in every town of our country. As I mentioned, to understand this message, we need to understand Dr.Ambedkar fully. And when we want to pay homage to him, our homage to Dr.Ambedkar should be to take forward his work, in implementing the Indian Constitution, as one of the most powerful instruments of peaceful social change in the world. Jai Hind and thank you.
