

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESENTATION OF SARASWATI  
SAMMAAN FOR THE YEAR 2014 TO DR. M VEERAPPA MOILY**

New Delhi: 10-08-2015

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this evening on the occasion of the presentation of the 24<sup>th</sup> Saraswati Sammaan. I am particularly happy to have the privilege of conferring this prestigious award on my fellow Parliamentarian and friend of mine for several decades, Dr. M. Veerappa Moily. I congratulate Dr. Moily for contributing to literature through his prolific writings along with having a successful political career.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The two great epics of India, Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Vyasa's *Mahabharata* have had a major role in moulding the *samskaras* and sentiments of most Indians. There is hardly any Indian, regardless of his religion, caste or creed, who is not familiar with these grand epics. If *the Mahabharata* instilled in us the values of forbearance, generosity and familial virtues, *the Ramayana* gave us images of filial, conjugal, and fraternal love in a world that treasured the welfare of all human beings. It is a rare combination of political philosophy and spiritual discourse bringing high morality to practical situations of daily life. So also Moily ji has reflected upon virtually all facets of social and political life in India today. In his magnificent composition of 43,000 lines inspired by the original epic of Valmiki, Moilyji has shared with us his unique insight into contemporary situations. He has then addressed them through the prism of the eternal principles of good governance, high morality and righteousness. He has, no doubt, drawn from his own variety of experiences as a political leader and administrator. He has shared his belief that present day India has a lot to learn from the Ramayana – especially that our nation-building effort must be based on the strong foundation of tolerance, pluralism and inclusiveness. I laud Moilyji for selecting the effective medium of poetry and the timeless theme of the Ramayana to deliver this important message. I congratulate him for reminding us, through his powerful

verse, that the challenges that our society faces today can be resolved if we follow our ancient value systems.

I am reminded of Gandhiji's dream of 'Ram Rajya', in which he envisioned an ideal society - where justice, equality, idealism, renunciation and sacrifice are practised. His Ram Rajya is a nation where peace, prosperity and tranquillity prevail. Gandhiji had once said that the Ram Rajya of his dreams meant, and I quote, "*sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority*". Just as good prevails over evil in the Ramayana - and Gandhiji's words "Satyamev Jayete" remind us that truth alone triumphs, Moilyji's epic brings to us such ageless values as compassion, self correction and discipline in thought and deed. I find, in his message, an echo of my own perceptions - that our democracy can only flourish if there is an active Parliament, if the representatives of the people have a clear vision, if their efforts are supported and supplemented by a diligent Government and an independent judiciary. Additionally, the system depends on a responsible media and a vigilant society.

Thus, our democratic rights come with responsibilities. We, the people of India are duty bound to make collective efforts to build our society, and contribute sincerely to the economic growth and inclusive development of our nation. Gandhiji stated once that it must be our endeavour to avoid the Seven Deadly Sins of "*Politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity and worship without sacrifice*". I have no doubt that through his magnificent work, *Shri Ramayana Mahanveshanam*, Moilyji will help create a greater sensitivity to such values.

This composition can truly be called a milestone - not only in the realm of Indian literature; but in the tradition of the Ramayana.

I am very glad that the poem has been translated into Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and English and has thus become accessible to a larger readership.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the K.K. Birla Foundation for instituting the Saraswati Sammaan and encouraging creative literature.

I thank them for giving me this honour and wish the Foundation every success in its other similar initiatives.

With these words, I once again congratulate my old friend Dr. Veerappa Moily.

I thank you all.

Jai Hind!