

**TO BE EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY.  
TO CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY.**

**ALIGNMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND ITS  
IMPLICATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF INDIA**

**25<sup>TH</sup> LEE KUAN YEW EXCHANGE FELLOW  
LECTURE BY**

**N. CHANDRABABU NAIDU  
LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN THE ANDHRA PRADESH LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY & PRESIDENT TELUGU DESAM PARTY  
ANDHRA PRADESH – INDIA**

**ISAS AND INTERNATIONAL ENTERPIRSE SINGAPORE  
FRIDAY, 6 JANUARY 2006**

## Alignments of Political Parties and Its Implications on the Future of India 25<sup>th</sup>, Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellow Lecture By

-- N. Chandra Babu Naidu

---

- I am delighted to be here in this great city of Singapore. Simha Pura, its ancient name brings back memories of the great historical and cultural relationships between India and South East Asia. My earlier visits to this island country have given me inspiration and made me think of a Vision for my own country.
- The names of Singapore and that of its great leader Lee Kuan Yew are inseparable. The scholarship and statesmanly leadership of the Honourable Lee Kuan Yew transformed a third world country of great penury and peril into the ranks of the First World.
- How this was done overcoming many threats and weaknesses is vividly recorded in the Honourable Lee Kuan Yew's two books, "The Singapore Story" and "From Third World to First".
- I have drawn great inspiration from the work and message of Honourable Lee Kuan Yew. He continues to be a brilliant intellectual and statesman which is borne out by his recent advice, that India and China, the two countries with very great, ancient civilisations should be invited to the East Asia Summit in December 2005. He observed – **"India would be a useful balance to China's weight. And this will be a restoration of two ancient civilizations. China and India, with their revival, their influence will again spread into South-East Asia. It would mean great prosperity for the region"**-
- The freshness of thinking of this great leader in whose honour the Exchange Fellowship is named and is being conferred upon me is an inspiration to me.
- A small island country with hardly any natural resources but having a great visionary leader is able to build up its intellectual capital and using that, leap frogged into a manufacturing and services economy.
- In the process attained enviable per capita income, matching that of the First World countries within four decades, cannot, but be a lesson for many and especially for a country like India.
- As acknowledged by the Honourable Lee Kuan Yew, India is an ancient country but with a continuous civilization. It is of continental size. Within the essential cultural unity and heritage and sense of an indivisible nation-hood, we have a variety of people with different languages, though almost all of them are derived from the mother of all languages, i.e. Sanskrit.

- The vastness of the country has fostered co-existence of different faiths and belief systems and also fortitude to put up with different levels of poverty and prosperity.
- Centuries of history have instilled in our people a sense of common nationhood and the will to preserve our glorious philosophical, scientific, technological and artistic heritage.
- Under the leadership of very saintly, fearless and wise persons like Lokamanya Balagangadhar Thilak and Mahatma Gandhi, throughout in the struggle for freedom from foreign imperial rule, we aspired that after freedom is won, we should build a prosperous and powerful nation.
- Even during the freedom struggle, our people realized that the common nation-hood could be strengthened by the different Provinces (now called, States) with their regional languages. It helps Governments at State and Union level and would be responsive to the people's wishes and wants.
- Reflecting these aspirations the Constitution of India has been uniquely crafted so that the State of India is not a Union of independent or autonomous states but formed it basically as a nation, secular in letter and spirit.
- The powers, duties and responsibilities of the state and the union governments have been clearly and categorically defined in the constitution.
- There are a few subjects in which the States and the Union have concurrent jurisdiction. It is obligatory on the part of Union Government to take into account views of the States in such matters. A fine harmony was thus built into our Constitution by the foresight, wisdom and sagacity of the leaders of our freedom struggle.
- In matters of defense, preservation of the unity and the integrity of the country and for all round development of the Nation, the Indian people have a common goal.
- The Indian National Congress, which was not a political party but a movement for the independence of India. It was a national movement and people with different political ideologies and social outlooks and different economic structures had all collaborated in this movement.
- When once the freedom was attained, we had taken a pledge to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunities of our masses. To fulfill this pledge, various political parties with different philosophies, ideologies and paths have cropped up competing for the allegiance of the voters.

- Mahatma Gandhi saw that groups based on different political ideologies were crystallizing within the movement and that some of them would be in conflict with one another.
- He therefore advised the National Congress, that after Independence was won, to dissolve it so that ideology based political parties could emerge and so in the free democratic India, there could be contest for people's loyalties.
- He counseled that leaders of the national movement should engage themselves in constructive work, addressing themselves to social awakening, education, and social service. Unfortunately, this advice of Gandhiji was not heeded.
- It was very difficult for other political parties to quickly build themselves into alternatives and challenge the Congress which has appropriated to itself, all the credit that was built up by different groups that struggled for the freedom of India.
- For the first 20 years after independence the Congress party was in power at the center, as well as all but one or two states. The Congress party appointed the Chief Ministers of the States. They were also changed very frequently and therefore no one grew in stature.
- Centralised planning and government on the one hand and centralized personalised leadership of the Congress party on the other, led to increasing disillusionment among people and within the State party units. Every State felt that it was being neglected.
- Under these circumstances arose powerful non-Congress parties emphasizing local issues reflecting local aspirations and almost revolting against reduction of the States into totally subordinate and dependent status. Having been betrayed by Congress rule at the union and states levels, Regionalism gained ground in various states of the country.
- When in 1977 Smt. Indira Gandhi lifted the "Emergency" imposed by her in 1975, various opposition parties both at the State and at the all India level came together to form the Janata Party (People's Party) and were able to inflict a crushing defeat on the Congress in the first post-Emergency elections to the Parliament.
- The Janata Party disintegrated very soon for various reasons like personality clashes and incompatibility of ideology among some of the constituents.
- Many political parties have got to align together to continue and preserve the parliamentary institutions in India.

- This was amply proved the strength of the democratic foundations laid down by the founding fathers of Indian constitution subsequent to the lifting of internal emergency in our country.
- The lesson that the non-Congress parties learnt was that while the regional parties could defeat the Congress at the State level, they have to come together in a sort of National Front to dislodge the Congress Party from power at the Centre. This they could do in 1989 when the National Front comprising several State-level parties was forged by a charismatic leader the late Sri N.T. Rama Rao, who has formed the Telugu Desam Party in 1982 and dislodged the Congress from power in the State of Andhra Pradesh in the short span of 9 months.
- That was a unique achievement of his and it infused hope and confidence into the regional parties.
- Each of the regional parties had its state-specific manifestos addressing the problems of its people but every one of them committed to national unity and territorial integrity.
- The fear that is often expressed about the loyalty of Regional Parties to the national ideals and their commitments to the principles of national unity and integrity is unfounded. For instance, we, of the Telugu Desam Party consider ourselves as Indians first and as Telugus later. We shall never place our regional interests above the national interest. We are prepared to make any kind of sacrifice and to meet any type of challenge, for the good of our country as a whole. So is the case with other regional parties.
- The present situation is that neither of the two pan-Indian parties (the Indian National Congress Party and the BJP) is able to single-handedly get a majority to establish a one-party government at the Union level. In the states different parties, beside the Congress Party and the BJP, are ruling.
- The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) forged by the BJP in 1999, consists of, beside itself, 22 regional parties. The present government at the Union level in Delhi is led by the National Congress with an alliance of 18 parties which has just 145 seats out of the total of 543 and the Alliance it has forged has 225 members far short of 273 for a majority.
- It is entirely dependant upon the Communist parties and their allies (about half a dozen of these together with 62 seats) for its majority in Lok Sabha of the Parliament. In some States no single party is able to get the required majority of seats.
- It can therefore be said that India now has entered into a period of coalition governments and the rule of single-party government at the Union level has ended.

- Happily the evidence is that the economic growth is in fact, much more than during the entire period of a single party dominated Union government. For Example: during the period 1998 to 2004 when the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) of 23 parties was in power in Delhi, India broke from the 3.5% to 5% GDP growth to reach 7% to 8% and promises to be more in future.
- To my mind, **the reason is that the State governments are getting liberated from the state of a vassal to Delhi to grow to more assertive local determinations.** In fact, there is competition in achieving growth between States ruled by different parties. This can be seen very clearly from the competitive growth between the three Southern States Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu, each one of which is ruled by a different party, some of them in opposition to the coalition that is ruling at the Center.
- If economic evolution grows slowly political revolutions occur faster.
- India broke from the centralized planning and controlled economy in 1991. The liberalization of the economy and end of the permit-license-quota raj has been devising tremendous initiatives, entrepreneurship and competition in Corporate Sector and that is the reason why the Indian economy is experiencing accelerated growth.
- During the tenure of one party dominant system, many constitutional institutions were either overlooked or by passed.
- This emasculation of democracy, by vested powers, prompted the formation of coalition governments, through the alignment of political parties in the larger interest of democracy.
- Such alignments that have lead to multi-party governments helped the growth and development of nation as whole.
- This is because of rational consensus on many Vital issues, subordinating to a vast extent the ideologies of constituent political parties.
- In the larger context if we may say so, India itself is a coalition.
- The requirement of numbers to constitute a majority can also bring into government such parties whose commitment to the basic principles of multi-party democracy, socialism, secularism and integrity of the country, which is of a dependable nature.
- In the present context there is no alternative to a coalition government for the Indian Union. We would hope that experience and wisdom would slowly build up a coalition, which will incorporate India's ancient values namely **unity in diversity, diversity in the several parts that could lead to the same goal**

**and realize the objectives** of a caring and prosperous State, cherishing individual freedom and collective prosperity.

- One may call the emergence of the coalition–era as a silent revolution in India’s political history.
- Friends, in the light of our recent experience, people have now come to take cognizance of the reality of coalition governments in the country. There is, however, a tendency to believe that coalitions lead to instability.
- This, I must say, is a misconception. It may be observed that most of the coalitions that we have witnessed have been able to provide stable governments, as we have seen in the states like West Bengal and Kerala over the years. At the national level too, coalitions have become the order of the day, notwithstanding the political instability, which we underwent in the late 1980s and through the 1990s.
- In India, coalition governments have proved to be stable and conducive to economic growth. Honest negotiation and fair reconciliation of conflicting demands are the required skills in coalition governments. Both of these will promote harmony and nation building.
- The divergent and incompatible interests of coalition partners should be reconciled in such a manner that the mutually agreeable objectives of the coalition partners could be accomplished. Such an understanding based on a broad-based programme acceptable to all may allow the coalition to withstand irritants in governance and to ensure that the goals of socio-economic development are met.
- Many countries in far-east and Middle East have earned their independence either a few years before or after India became independent.
- They have adopted various forms of Government like Democracies, Republics and Sheikdoms in the Middle East.
- But now competitiveness and economic development are the only isms that have initiated economic reforms with a human face.
- China was once a regimented society, had adopted Communism. But now transformed itself into a semi-capitalist economy with sound economic reforms.
- It helped China achieve almost supreme status both in economic and in political arenas.

- But U.S.S.R., which had adopted Communism, did not initiate any major economic reforms worth its name and got itself balkanised.
- Singapore, though a small country, adopted an export oriented economy and thereby graduated to the status of a highly developed country by 1<sup>st</sup> January 1996 in the world.
- Whatever might be the nature of government or the parties that rule the country, the focus should be on economic reforms with Human Face.
- It can therefore be said that Economic Reforms will alone help the Nations to prosper and to compete successfully in this highly competitive world.
- As a result of Globalisation and liberalization of economies, South East Asian Countries could achieve magnificent progress. This has got an impact on programmes of all political parties in India also.
- A new era has begun from the year 1991 when the Government have initiated a new policy of liberalization and new economic policy as also dismantling of controls and permit raj.
- This major shift in our country's economic focus opened up new avenues in the era of globalization.
- For the first time India talked of economic sanity in place of economic ideology.
- India has realized the imperative necessity of fruitful egalitarianism.
- With enormous bounty of natural and human resources, India has to devise ways and means to create wealth.
- Creation of wealth will help us to narrow the vast gulf between the urban rich and rural poor.
- As on today India's achieved growth rate, is not adequate for sustainable economic growth. Therefore the need is to find our ways and means to raise this growth rate with all the resources at our command.
- Though agriculture contributes 21% of Indian GDP, it still remains the bedrock of Indian economy. Around 70% of the people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Hence not less than 4% growth rate per annum in agriculture is essential not only for achieving higher overall growth but also for lifting millions of households from poverty and generating massive employment opportunities. This calls for total transformation of the rural economy and develop a dynamic agriculture sector.

- The greatest challenge that the developing nations are facing is the equitable distribution of wealth. It has to be ensured that the wealth generated has to be distributed in such a way that the poor and down trodden especially peasants and artisans should be liberated from the curse of poverty, thus improving their economic standards, which alone will make them to lead a happy life.
- Apart from economic reforms some more reforms with a human face is the need of the hour.
- It is high time to go in for certain concrete reforms for better governance of people.
- They help create congenial atmosphere for them to live with prosperity, in peace and social harmony.
- We require political and electoral reforms basing on healthy democratic values and on ethical foundations.
- To have a vibrant, responsive and responsible democracy we should bring into political fore knowledge people from all walks of life
- To put an end to the widespread perversions of democracy, state funding of elections will be a corrective measure.
- To have stable and effective governments the anti-defection laws should be suitably enacted and rigidly enforced.
- To have free fair and fearless poll money power and muscle power should be curbed.
- Democratic polity has to be liberated from the inhuman malady of criminalisation.
- In addition to these reforms - accountable administrative reforms, healthy labour reforms and judicial reforms are imperative.
- To translate these reforms into realities we require, transparency, accountability, integrity of mind and purpose, commitment and dedication.
- Accumulation of material prosperity should not be allowed to cause spiritual poverty.
- India for over trackless centuries has been standing as a radiant symbol of spiritual values and matured culture.

- If we want to benefit from the phenomenon of globalization, we have no choice but to lay stress on high quality education. 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a century of knowledge and pragmatism.
- “When Mr. Lee Kuan Yew was asked by the B.B.C. as what he attributed the phenomenal success of Singapore, his answer was in one word ‘Education’ This is the priority of priorities, he said”
- Progressive parties with young men at the helm like Telugu Desam Party (TDP) are educating the people on **the importance of universal and high quality education, entrepreneurship and also limited family size**. We are emphasizing the importance of infrastructure for economic and human resource development by way of roads, sea and air ports, electric power, development of Agriculture on Scientific lines, schools and colleges, hospitals and renovation of the great heritage sites and towns to cater to the growing number of international tourists.
- Enlightened parties and their governments in the States are competing with one another to attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). This is essential for the creation of wide variety of infrastructural facilities, which help promote growth & development as also generation of wealth to quickly deliver their people out of poverty. Some of the states ruled by regional parties have promoted the use of telecommunications and Information Technology (IT) from the village to the State level for good governance, transparency and delivery of responsive government services and Andhra Pradesh has taken a lead in it.
- Andhra Pradesh was the first to provide a **VISION-2020** development programme to inspire our people for entrepreneurship and to encourage them to be partners with the State in all-round development.
- I am sure that in India the national interest would always prevail. There are enough leaders of wisdom and statesmanship to see that coalition governments will get further strengthened to deliver the goods and would work together for the good of every State and the whole of the Indian Nation.

In fine I should say that:

**My most cherished dream is that India should build an economic structure that fulfils a dual purpose: namely, to lift the curse of poverty and unemployment on the one hand and to ensure the flowering of a powerful technological civilization and industrial culture on the other.**

I thank one and all and wish you all well.

.....