

संस्थापक : नाना देशमुख
अध्यक्ष : वीरेन्द्रजीत सिंह

दीनदयाल
शोध
संस्थान



DEENDAYAL
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७-ई, स्वामी रामतीर्थ नगर, रानी झांसी रोड, नई दिल्ली-११००५५
दूरभाष : २३५२६७३५, २३५२६७६२, २३५२४५५५. फ़ैक्स : २३५५२८१२

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It was our sacred duty to nurture democracy according to our traditional values. The electoral process is central to a democratic structure, but this is just the mean to an end and not the end in itself. Democracy, in fact, starts where the electoral process ends.

It was expected of the elected representatives that with the active cooperation of all people of their constituency, they would create a contemporaneous society, as society is the basic strength of the state. The success of democracy is inherent in peaceful co-existence and a composite society. Unless driven by this sentiment, good governance is unachievable.

India got its independence in 1947. In the year 1952, the first elections to Parliament took place under the ratified constitution of India. For a debutant democracy to last and grow, the prime obligation of the first government should have been to translate our independence into self-reliance. However, instead of inspiring and mobilizing each and every citizen in this direction, the concept of liberty, more or less, remained confined only to the elected representatives.

Unless the country's six hundred thousand villages regain their self-esteem by becoming self-reliant, freedom has no meaning. Even after 57 years of independence, neither the villages nor the country have become self-reliant in real terms. But this does not seem to be a cause for concern for any of the political leaders!

These so-called leaders may be effective orators and may excel in dialectics. They may have been rewarded for their adroitness in parliament. But have these skills of theirs contributed a bit towards self-reliance in even one village?

Delhi, the capital of India, is a city endowed with all human comforts; a diffuse network of surface communication, facilitated by wide clean roads and flyovers, the most modern metro which is the cynosure of all eyes; a tall and impressive skyline, fountains and miles and miles of sprawling greens and gardens. Its captivating beauty can compete with the best of the developed world.

But the moot question is whether the construction of a temple begins from the spire or the foundation? More than six hundred thousand villages of India are symbolic of the state of this country, where even after 57 years of