

**ADDRESS BY RETIRED FOREIGN SECRETARY AND AMBASSADOR
NIRUPAMA MENON RAO AT THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF
MAHARAJA JAYA CHAMARAJA WADIYAR, BENGALURU, JULY 20, 2019**

(Salutations)

Today we celebrate the memory, the life and the legacy of a Renaissance figure, the late Maharaja Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar, a historic figure in many ways, a personality whose love and patronage of the arts, both Indian and western, cannot be forgotten. Apart from this, living as he did, on the cusp of critical historical transitions, both as witness and player in the formation of our nation, makes the study of his life most fascinating and noteworthy.

What is a renaissance figure – he or she, whose mind is open to constant learning and the gaining of knowledge in diverse spheres of human accomplishment. One whose interest in the sweet mystery of life never flags. One who is like the ocean itself – able to embrace many multitudes.

I believe that the late Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar was such a person. I am reminded of the quote of William Shakespeare: “his life was gentle; and the elements so mixed in him, that nature might stand up and say to all the world, this was a man!”

At the time of Indian independence, the maharaja of Mysore was ruler of one of the largest princely states in pre-independent India – apart from Mysore, the others were Hyderabad, Baroda, Gwalior and Jammu and Kashmir. Mysore was the first state in India to pioneer in the establishment of an institution for representing the people – the Mysore representative assembly, building the self-worth of its people and nurturing the spirit of democratic debate and interface with the government of the time. Indeed, the experiment caught the attention of a young Indian lawyer in south Africa in 1894. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, our beloved Bapu, when he countered the view expressed that Indians were not fit for representation in the natal legislative assembly, said: “the state of Mysore has at the present moment, a representative parliament, called the Mysore assembly, on the exact model of the British parliament.”

The Maharaja ruled a state that was also a pioneer in many other ways. Mysore, widely known as the land of fragrance, of the aura and aroma of sandalwood, the rainbow hues of its silks, was the first princely state to establish a university, a hydro-electric station, the first aircraft factory in India, and it had a broadcasting station (Akashvani). The Brindavan gardens outside the city of Mysore were deemed a fairyland. Its ruling family the Wadiyars were known for their enlightened rule. I cannot but recall with awe that it was at the oriental research institute library in Mysore, set up by the then maharaja in 1891 (the uncle of Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar, Chamarajendra Wadiyar X) that the manuscript of Kautilya’s Arthashastra was discovered by the Vedic and Sanskrit scholar, Rudrapatnam Shamasastri in 1905 – it was an event that completely changed the world’s outlook on India’s traditions of governance and statecraft.

On the eve of Indian independence, as a powerful example of the late maharaja’s devotion to the idea of India, Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar signed the Instrument of Accession merging Mysore with the then Dominion of India. Speaking a few years later, when he was governor of the state of Mysore, he referred to these developments and I quote:

“You have referred..to what your generosity has termed my ‘sacrifice’. I do not look upon it as such. If destiny had decreed that over the past few centuries the progress and prosperity of this beloved state should

be in the hands of the Wadeyars of Mysore, then that same destiny now ordains that the time is ripe for the people, now grown to full political stature in a free democratic republic, to rule themselves.”

In fact, the Maharaja wanted Swarajya for India to be like the Ramrajya of Gandhiji’s dreams. He wanted the freedom that India had attained after a long and heroic struggle to be felt and enjoyed by our millions, all across this sacred janmabhoomi. And what he meant was education for all, equity for all, inclusiveness of the social fabric, and respect for our history, our heritage and the rich multicultural fabric of Indian society. His stress on education, particularly the education of women stands out, and received much-deserved praise from many. Here is the Bishop of Lahore speaking in 1946: “we are glad that you regard education as the minimum programme if India is to take her rightful place among the great nations of the world. You have been swift to discern the real meaning of the word critical, the difference between wisdom and knowledge: you have reminded us of truth, goodness and beauty — those eternal verities which Plato insisted on and which are the very fibre of the Upanishads and that they are the only safeguards if the human race is going to preserve its civilization”.

History and the arts are of particular interest to me in this context. And I was particularly drawn to the reference to the Maharaja in a history of Mysore published in 1943 where he is described as: “*ruler, scholar, and patron of the arts and sciences and supporter of every good cause aiming at the moral and material progress of the people* “. And so, I circle back to the concept of the Renaissance man: that competence in a broad range of abilities and areas of knowledge should be every man or woman’s goal and is within everyone’s grasp.

We are also gathered on this very special occasion to dwell on the magic of music – the music, both Carnatic and Western, that Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar truly appreciated and had deep knowledge of, as a connoisseur of the fine arts.

Our first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru used to say of western music in India: “in India, we have been rightly encouraging all branches of Indian music. Unfortunately, however, western music tends rather to fade out of our ken...I think that it is desirable and even necessary for western music to have a definite place in India. Not only would this be an encouragement of some of the highest developments in music, but it would be helpful, I think, in its reactions on Indian music”.

I think that every globalised Indian mind should have the largeness of mind and heart to accommodate both the genius of Indian and western music as the Maharaja demonstrated in his lifetime through the patronage and his active immersion and involvement with both musical genres and traditions.

The Maharaja’s support for the Russian composer Nikolai Medtner, for the London Philharmonia Society – support that gave the legendary Herbert von Karajan a major career break – the opportunity he gave Richard Strauss to have his last four songs performed by the famed soprano Kirsten Flagstad, his generosity in ensuring that great recordings of classical composers were made, are all the stuff of legend, and deserve our awe and admiration. He knew the music he loved, through and through and I recall what he had to say when he heard Karajan’s recording with the Vienna Philharmonic of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony that it was “as Beethoven wished it to be”. In 1950, Walter Legge, the British record producer was profuse in his praise for “the vision, constructive enterprise and generosity of the young Indian prince who

conceived this plan, and who is making it possible for the music lovers throughout the world to learn, enjoy and study works which but for his knowledge and love of music, would never have been recorded.”

Truly, the life and legacy of Shri Jaya Chamaraja Wadiyar , prince and philosopher, philosopher and prince, is a shining exemplar for us who would like to see the moral and material progress of our nation, a nation that is secure, modern, progressive, prosperous, and is rooted in its rich traditions while still confident about welcoming global ideas and concepts. I greatly look forward to the concert by the symphony orchestra of India this evening, under the able direction of Marat Bisengaliev. I congratulate the family of the late Maharaja, particularly the Rajmata, and Maharajkumaris Kamakshi and Indrakshi, for having conceived of the idea of this concert and bringing it to successful fruition. The fragrance of the spirit and the soul of the late Maharaja are I feel, very much with us today, blessing our gathering with his beneficence and good wishes.

Thank you, and Jai Hind.
