

SPEECH OF THE HOME MINISTER, SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF KABIR PURASKAR AND NATIONAL COMMUNAL HARMONY AWARDS ON WEDNESDAY, 12TH AUGUST, 2009.

Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji, Hon'ble Vice President, Hon'ble Prime Minister, awardees, distinguished guests and friends,

I welcome you to this function which has been organised to present "Kabir Puraskar" and "National Communal Harmony Awards". I am indeed deeply grateful to the Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji for graciously agreeing to present these awards. I also express my warm thanks to the Vice President and the Prime Minister for gracing this occasion which is, verily, a celebration.

2. "Kabir Puraskar" was instituted by the Central Government in order to promote communal harmony by recognizing acts of physical or moral courage and humanity, exhibited by the members of any community, caste or ethnic group in saving the lives and properties of the members of another community, caste or ethnic group.

3. The National Communal Harmony Award was instituted to honour the outstanding contribution of individuals or organizations for the promotion of communal harmony and national integration over a sustained period of time.

4. I have often reflected on the true identity of an individual. Even before birth, a child is impressed with the identity of its family. At a tender age, when there are the first stirrings of consciousness or self-

awareness, the child begins to recognize several identities. There is the identity of language – one is a Gujarati or a Bengali or a Kannadiga. Similarly, there is the identity of religion. There is the identity of race. Then, unique to India, there is the identity of caste or sub-caste. Layer upon layer of identities seem to have buried the true identity of an individual. Throughout one's life, one often struggles with these multiple identities. Nevertheless, I believe, beneath these layers there is the essential humanism of an individual. And that humanism must be the true identity of anyone belonging to the human race.

5. Today, we celebrate the essential humanism of the awardees as individuals or as persons running organisations. Each one of them has reached out to other human beings and promoted tolerance, communal harmony, brotherhood and peaceful coexistence.

6. I am grateful that so many of you from different walks of life have accepted our invitation and joined us in these celebrations. I offer you a warm welcome and hope that the examples before you, and the words that you will hear from our distinguished guests, will be sources of inspiration.

7. Thank you, and once again a warm welcome to all of you.

JAI HIND
