

## Pluralism and tolerance hallmark of our civilization

### President of India

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**USPA NEWS** - New Delhi: President Pranab Mukherjee delivering the 1st Arjun Singh Memorial Lecture organized by the Arjun Singh Sadbhavna Foundation in New Delhi on Saturday. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is also seen. PTI Photo by Vijay Verma.

### India's Strength Lies In Her Diversity

The President of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee said pluralism and tolerance have been the hallmark of our civilization. India's strength lies in her diversity. He was delivering a memorial lecture at New Delhi on April 9, organized by the Arjun Singh Sadbhavna Foundation and the Madhya Pradesh Foundation in honour of late Shri Arjun Singh, former Union Minister.

The President said in a pluralistic democracy, it is important that the values of tolerance, respect for contrary views and patience are inculcated amongst the citizens particularly the youth. Pluralism and tolerance is a core philosophy that must continue undeterred. India is a multi-faceted nation of 1.3 billion people, 122 languages, 1600 dialects and 7 religions. This cannot be turned into fiction due to the whims and caprices of few individuals. Plurality of our society has come about through assimilation of ideas over centuries.

The multiplicity in culture, faith and language is what makes India special. We derive our strength from tolerance. It has been part of our collective consciousness for centuries. It has worked well for us and it is the only way it will work for us. There are divergent strands in public discourse. We may argue. We may not agree. But we cannot deny the essential prevalence of multiplicity of opinion. Otherwise, a fundamental character of our thought process will wither away.

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The President said democracy is not all about numbers but also calls for consensus building. A phenomenon seen in recent times is the way the common man is engaged with affairs of the nation. While we must wield no space to anarchy, efficient democratic machinery must have the means and wherewithal to absorb public opinion for formulation of sound policies.

Remembering Shri Arjun Singh, the President said Shri Arjun Singhji was one leader whose heart and mind was rooted to the ground. He never lost his simplicity to power, nor did he lose his concern for the common man. He dedicated himself to the building of a strong nation based on the values of secularism and democracy which he dearly cherished.

Pointing out Shri Arjun Singh's contribution in the field of education, the President said with over eight years, Arjun Singhji had the longest tenure as Human Resource Development Minister after Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The education landscape in India naturally had a considerable imprint of the policies that Arjun Singhji had pursued.

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