

alumnus Parliamentarian Dr Ashwani Kumar's stirring Farewell Speech Rajya Sabha 16.03.2016



Dr Ashwani Kumar
BA His Hons 1972 St Stephen's
LLB 1975 MPhil 1976

Chairman 2014 – 2016
Parliamentary Standing Committee
Science and Technology, Environment and Forests

Cabinet Minister 2012 – 2013
Law and Justice / PM Special Envoy to Japan

Minister of State 2011- 2012
Planning, Science and Technology and Earth Sciences (independent charge)

As I rise today

to make a farewell speech, I am overwhelmed by the fact that for the last 14 years I have had the singular privilege of walking in the shadow of great men of our times. National icons such as B. R. Ambedkar, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Purushottam Das Tandon, Smt. Lakshmi Menon and others have added lustre to this House and I am overcome by a feeling of deep gratitude towards all those who made this journey possible. In a long, arduous and a fulfilling political journey I have had the privilege of being mentored, guided and supported by eminent leaders of our time.

This House, conceived as a **bulwark against the impulses of transient majorities and custodian of the nation's moral conscience** is expected to vindicate its role in protecting **“humanity's rightful dignity and moral integrity”**. In these trying times, the Rajya Sabha is expected to be the torch bearer of liberty, dignity and freedom of

all citizens. Indeed, every age has to write its history and define the future. India's future as a democratic nation will be determined through an unrelenting pursuit of our liberties.

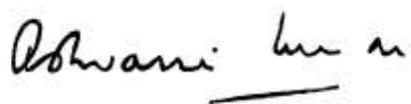
The defining distinction of India in the 21st century will be its ability to reinforce the self-correcting mechanisms of democracy and preservation of the legacy of liberalism. We are aware that the victory of the ideals of justice and equality maybe ephemeral but if we manage to preserve liberty, we can forever continue to exert for the triumph of these ideals. I believe that as the highest forum of democracy, this House will ensure the vindication of reason over passion, of principle over expediency.

My tryst with politics and membership of this august house has taught me many lessons. The first is that **hypocrisy annuls leadership**. The second lesson is that, "What you do not wish yourself, do not do to others." I realized that in Parliament, one's worst enemies are not always sitting on the Opposite benches; they are alongside or behind you and that in the final analysis a man's own character is the arbiter of his fortune. **I learnt also that in politics as in life there should be room for multiple loyalties. The foremost loyalty must be to one's own conscience and to the country.**

As I look to life ahead, I pledge to fight for freedom, peace and harmony everywhere. I know that life is too short to be little. **I also know that misread scriptures will not divide us as a nation and that we stand united by a continuing sense of loyalty to the national project.**

With these words, with a spirit free and head held high, I bid adieu to my colleagues in the House and hope that they will generously forgive me for my shortcomings; for "to err is human, to forgive is divine".

Thank You ! Jai Hind

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashwani Kumar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

(Dr Ashwani Kumar)