

INDIAS VIBGYOR MAN: SELECTED WRITINGS AND SPEECHES OF L.M. SINGHVI, (2018). Edited by Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Lokendra Malik, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Pp. 335, Price: Rs. 795/-.

THE BOOK titled 'India's Vibgyor Man: Selected Writings and Speeches of L.M. Singhvi' is a compilation containing unpublished articles and speeches of L.M. Singhvi on diverse topics pertaining to law, literature, diplomacy, governance and much more. This Book is a tribute to L.M. Singhvi and it has been edited by Abhishek Manu Singhvi and Lokendra Malik. L.M. Singhvi passed away in 2007 leaving behind a long trail of achievements in diverse fields. The book reverberates that L.M. Singhvi was a multifaceted personality – author, jurist, statesman, philosopher, and a social reformer or a change maker to be more appropriate and the most celebrated Indian public figure of his times. Singhvi started his career as a lawyer from Jodhpur District Court and went on to become the Advocate General of Rajasthan, after which he moved to the Supreme Court, making a splendid contribution in diverse fields. He became India's High Commissioner in England in 1991 and held office until 1997. He was the longest serving high commissioner of India in England after Krishna Menon. He also gave his perspective in this piece on Indian professionals working in the United Kingdom.¹ He contended that United Kingdom gives many moving errands to Indian experts and had a vision of the superior future for Indian professionals working in the United Kingdom keeping in view the verifiable historical association between the two nations.

The book brings out the magnanimous personality of Singhvi through his biographical sketch and through his speeches giving a genuine and legitimate record of his ideologies. The book has been divided into two parts, where Part 1 covers the biographical account of L.M. Singhvi covering many phases of his life journey, his contributions and achievements in various fields which are interminable. Part 2 of the book has three sections A, B and C which reflect upon his academic writings. Section A contains writings on issues pertaining to public governance and administration. Section B contains issues addressed by him related to diplomacy and international affairs and section C covers his ideology and contribution on areas such as education, literature, health, religion, arts and society. The book through his speeches gives a detailed insight of his detailed contribution as a scholar of international eminence. He played a

¹ Part 2, Section B at 114-120.

significant role in establishing Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies in Delhi. His speeches clearly reflect that he was a man with a vision and expressed his views freely on many socio-legal issues of contemporary significance. His observations on Constitutionalism of India as a lawyer, parliamentarian, and as a diplomat, have played a noteworthy role in strengthening the spirit of rule of law and constitutionalism in the country. He was a great defender of freedom of press and expression, particularly freedom of press, which is the fourth pillar of our democracy as to him, the press was highly instrumental in promoting intellectual growth of human beings who ultimately constitute the nation. He defended secularism on all platforms, be it court of law or the Parliament. Singhvi at the Convocation of University of Delhi on August 6, 1995 addressed the gathering and expressed that the Indian colleges need to address the essential issue of what they are relied upon to accomplish and what they are really delivering. His address at the convocation is mentioned in Part C of the book under educational reforms in India.² He also highlighted his concern that quality has turned out to be progressively peripheral and that isn't just a direct result of the asset crunch and he further expressed that he felt Indian colleges in today's time are neither focused nor innovative. They appear to have lost their direction since they have lost their imperativeness of the general ethos of every single instructive framework.

The book also additionally illuminates Singhvi's dynamic personality and being a follower of Gandhian jurisprudence in its true letter and spirit, he has always been a supporter of non-violence. He has made some of the finest recommendations in his discourses and works. He opined that the political parties should disclose their choice for the office of the Prime Minister before forming any post poll alliance.³ This would help people take a well-informed and well-educated choice for a superior government. Singhvi was the first person in the country to coin the term 'Lokpal' during the Prime Ministership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1963. The book also explicates the importance of education for Singhvi and he believed that living and learning are in a sense co-extensive. The universities and colleges are significant on the ground that knowledge is significant and it is information of life and learning forever, which together continue developments, guarantee their survival and encourage their advancement and success. Information edifies, liberates, engages, and changes. He requested in one of his speeches that the understudies use their insight for the country building process. Being a supporter of the idea of

² Section C, Part 2 at 252.

³ Section A, Part 2 at 58-64.

Uniform Civil Code in the country, he accentuated on the need of its auspicious implementation keeping in view its provision and prominence in the constitutional text. He has been bestowed with so many prestigious awards and has been associated with many government committees and international bodies including the United Nations. He assumed a significant job in fortifying the Indian diaspora framework.

The book opens Singhvi's perspective on public governance and decentralization wherein he has valued the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions to fortify the democratic fabric of the country.⁴ He has pursued Gandhiji's line of Gram Swaraj in his musings. He was an extraordinary supporter of decentralization of powers who stressed on concentrating on nation building through institution building. Rajiv Gandhi when he was the Prime Minister was receptive towards his suggestion. This reflects that Singhvi was open and extraordinarily ahead of the curve. The same is reflected in the writings and speeches of Singhvi finding a mention in Section A of Part 2 of the book.

The editors have dealt with Singhvi's perceptions on the civil services and good governance keeping in view the upsides and downsides of the bureaucratic system predominant in the nation. Singhvi appreciates the role of civil services in nation building but also had shed light on how corruption can be exterminated from the system to have corruption free governance. He also emphasized on the need to improve the quality of democratic governance system in the country. Singhvi was an incredible backer of good administration and decentralization. He accepted that little states are vehicles of good administration in the nation.

Singhvi's perspective on Kashmir problem accounted in this book in Section B of Part 2 of the Book,⁵ keeping in view the worldwide difficulties to the Kashmir issue reflected that the alleged interest for free Kashmir and the supposed third alternative is generally and lawfully with no premise, and politically it would be a wellspring of interminable interest, unending distress, and determined destabilization of either nation, and the abuse of Jammu and Kashmir as a pawn on the worldwide chessboard. Singhvi asserted that the individuals who represent the third alternative based on rule of self-determination do not seem to comprehend the idea which is

⁴ Section A, Part 2 at 37-44.

⁵ Section B, Part 2 at 141-149.

bound in global law to decolonization and can't be utilized as an instrument for breaking down multicultural sovereign and democratic states.

This book imparts knowledge on lot of important issues discussed and deliberated upon by Singhvi and others. This collection of speeches and writings in a book makes a good read particularly for the administrators and the future age to gain from the remarkably astounding observations made by a man with such wide knowledge to comprehend things from a more extensive and propelled viewpoint. It is admirable how such complex issues involving law, human rights, international relations, diplomacy, and governance have been put with such simplicity and ease by Singhvi. The title of 'Vibgyor Man' is so apt for Singhvi going through his writings and speeches, Singhvi truly is the Vibgyor man, who wrote and deliberated on variety of issues relevant in contemporary socio-political and socio-legal discourse. The only thing this book misses is the connection between the speeches and writings, which could have been done by connecting all the speeches and writings while drawing his biographical sketch simultaneously.

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