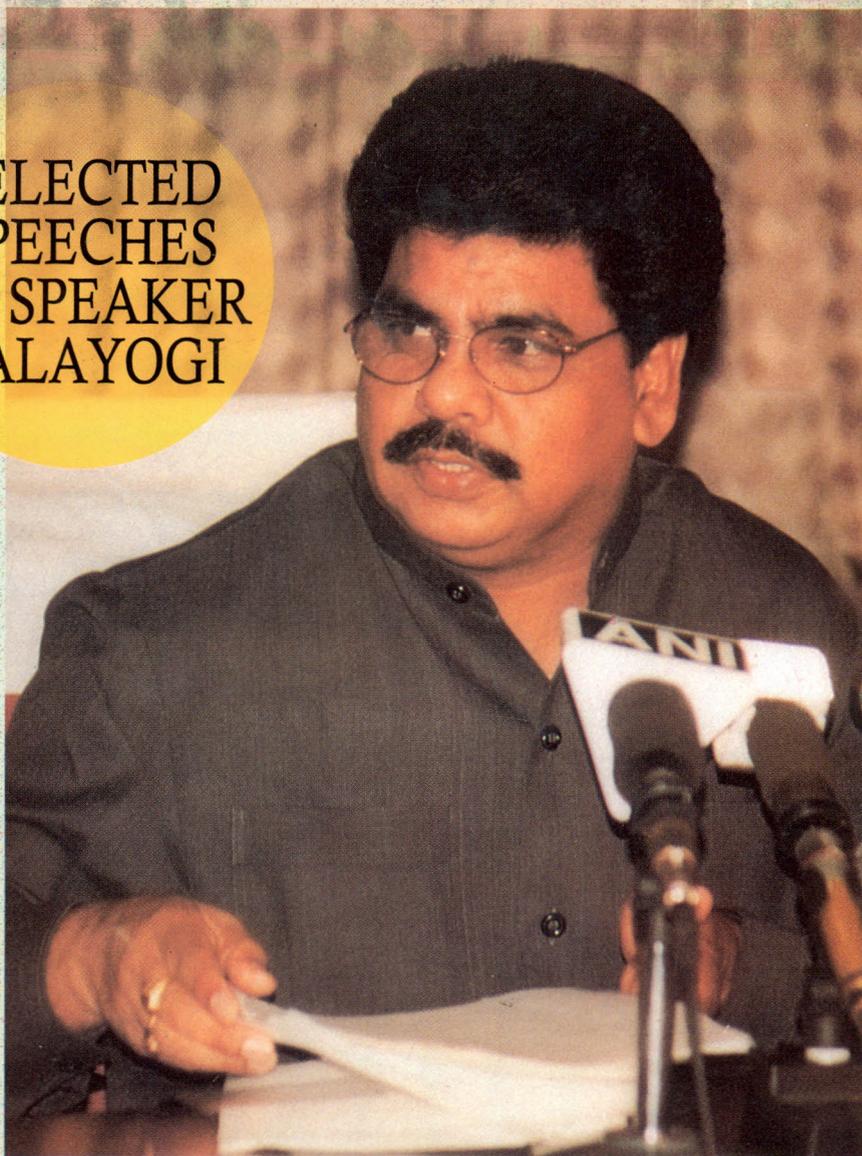


The Speaker Speaks

SELECTED
SPEECHES
OF SPEAKER
BALAYOGI



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

Constitution and the People

The Constitution is the fundamental law of the land which links the citizens with the State in an organic relationship. This is all the more so in a developing country like ours. Here, the Constitution and the institutions it has created have to function as instruments of social change. That is why, it is essential that the people should know what their Constitution contains and what it aspires to achieve.

Parliamentary Polity

Parliament occupies a pivotal place in our political system. The polity revolves around the institutions of Parliament. It is the Parliament which is responsible to the nation for good governance. The Executive emanates from Parliament, is accountable to Parliament and is in office during the pleasure of Parliament.

Coalitions

Coalitions do involve management of contradictions; harmonization of competing interests of alliance partners ... The need of the times is to reconcile the interests of stability ... with the political dynamics inherent in governance through coalition. In the process of this reconciliation, Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies have to play a crucial role.

Empowerment of Women

The demand for women's equal partnership with men in politics has an obvious reason. Though women constitute half of the world's population, they are dismally outnumbered in politics. Indeed, in politics, the case is one of missing women. Of over 40,000 members of Parliament world-wide, women members account for only 12 per cent — about 4500.

Dalit Uplift

We cannot build a rational, progressive and egalitarian society unless we succeed in our endeavour to uplift Dalits socially and economically. The crucial test of governance for all of us lies in how effectively we can pull the weak and the downtrodden out of the difficulty of socio-economic backwardness and injustice.

THE SPEAKER SPEAKS
SELECTED SPEECHES OF SPEAKER BALAYOGI



सत्यमेव जयते

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

1999

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PREFACE

The Speaker of Lok Sabha is a key functionary in our constitutional framework. Within the House, what he says is conclusive and outside, as the chief spokesman of the institution, his views reflect the collective wisdom of the House, which represents the nation because it is directly elected by the people on the basis of universal adult franchise. The Speaker thus carries a great deal of representative and symbolic significance for the nation as a whole. The Speaker is a high dignitary who is much sought after and is in great demand to grace public functions and address the audiences on a host of subjects. The views of the Speaker carry great weight because what he says is not coloured by political preference. The Constitution visualizes the office of the Speaker as an honoured position to be occupied by men of outstanding ability and unquestionable impartiality.

Shri Ganti Mohana Chandra Balayogi was elected the Speaker of the Twelfth Lok Sabha on 24 March 1998. By his dignified and impartial conduct and graceful demeanour, he endeared himself to all sections of the House. As a leader who takes pride in making himself accessible to all sections of society, he attended numerous functions, big and not so big, and spoke on a wide variety of subjects. As the readers would notice, Shri Balayogi has a remarkable ability to load his high thinking into a simple language, so that nobody would have any difficulty to understand what he says. He speaks briefly, but says all that he has to express. To him, brevity is the soul of wisdom.

This Volume would give an insight into the mind of an outstanding Speaker of our times who is young in age but remarkably mature in outlook. In order to help the readers get a comprehensive picture of Shri Balayogi's perspective on varied subjects, the Volume contains not only his speeches and Observations made from the Chair as the Speaker of Lok Sabha but also his speeches in the Tenth Lok Sabha and what he spoke as a Minister in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly prior to getting elected to Parliament a second time and becoming the Speaker. In this context, I must record my sincere thanks and appreciation for the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly Secretariat for making available the speeches delivered by Shri Balayogi in the Assembly.

This Volume comprises only a representative section of the speeches delivered by Shri Balayogi and hence it is not a complete compilation of his

speeches. The speeches have been suitably edited for inclusion in this publication. Some of the speeches made in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly were originally in Telugu which have been translated into English for inclusion in this Volume. Similarly, some of the speeches delivered as Speaker, Lok Sabha were rendered into Telugu, depending on the occasion on the basis of the original English version. Therefore, verbatim veracity may not be there in certain cases.

It is hoped that this Volume would be found useful and informative by men of learning and lay readers alike who have an interest in the functioning of our parliamentary institutions.

NEW DELHI
August, 1999

G.C. MALHOTRA
*Secretary-General
Lok Sabha*

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACR	—	Annual Confidential Report
ADB	—	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	—	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIIMS	—	All India Institute of Medical Sciences
ATM	—	Automated Teller Machine
BJP	—	Bharatiya Janata Party
BPST	—	Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training
CAG	—	Comptroller and Auditor General
CBI	—	Central Bureau of Investigation
CEDAW	—	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
CMEY	—	Chief Minister's Empowerment of the Youth
CPA	—	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPI	—	Communist Party of India
CVC	—	Central Vigilance Commission
DoT	—	Department of Telecommunications
DPC	—	Departmental Promotion Committee
DPAP	—	Drought Prone Areas Programme
DRDA	—	District Rural Development Agencies
DTH	—	Direct to Home Services
EAMCET	—	Engineering, Agriculture and Medical Common Entrance Test
EIPL	—	East India Petroleum Limited
ESI	—	Employees State Insurance
GAIL	—	Gas Authority of India Limited
GDP	—	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	—	Gross National Product
HDD	—	Horizontal Directional Drilling
HIV	—	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAS	—	Indian Administrative Service
IETE	—	Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers
IIM	—	Indian Institute of Management
IIT	—	Indian Institute of Technology

IMA	—	Indian Medical Association
IMF	—	International Monetary Fund
IPE	—	Institute of Public Enterprise
IPU	—	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRDP	—	Integrated Rural Development Programme
ITEC	—	Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation
JRY	—	Jawahar Rozgar Yojana
LPG	—	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
MPLADS	—	Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme
NABARD	—	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NAM	—	Non-Aligned Movement
NCC	—	National Cadet Corps
NEC	—	North-Eastern Council
NERCPA	—	North-East Region Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
NFCL	—	Nagarjuna Fertiliser Corporation Limited
NGOs	—	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIRD	—	National Institute of Rural Development
NPE	—	National Policy on Education
NREP	—	National Rural Employment Programme
NRI	—	Non-Resident Indian
NTPC	—	National Thermal Power Corporation
ONGC	—	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation
PAC	—	Public Accounts Committee
PCA	—	Prevention of Corruption Act
PMA	—	Parliamentary Museum and Archives
PSUs	—	Public Sector Undertakings
RBI	—	Reserve Bank of India
SAARC	—	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	—	South Asia Free Trade Area
SAPTA	—	South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement
SAVE	—	SAARC Audio-Visual Exchange Programme
SBI	—	State Bank of India
SCOPE	—	Standing Committee of Public Enterprises
TDP	—	Telugu Desam Party
TRYSEM	—	Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment
UDHR	—	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UGC	—	University Grants Commission

PART I
PROFILE



Shri G.M.C. Balayogi
Hon'ble Speaker, Twelfth Lok Sabha

In our political system, Parliament is the microcosm of the nation as it represents the country at large. It is, indeed, a vehicle of social engineering in a developing society like ours. It is instrumental in channelling the nation's march on the path of progress, prosperity and stability. The success of its role depends to a large extent on the respect that Parliament can command from the people. It has to lead the nation by example. And that is where the constitutional significance of the august office of the Speaker comes into perspective. And that is what makes this office a seat of authority and a position of responsibility. As Pandit Nehru once remarked:

The Speaker represents the House. He represents the dignity of the House, the freedom of the House and because the House represents the nation, in a particular way, the Speaker becomes the symbol of the nation's freedom and liberty. Therefore, it is right that, that should be an honoured position, a free position and should be occupied always by men of outstanding ability and impartiality.

That is why the Speaker figures very high in the Table of Precedence of the Government of India. We have a line of illustrious leaders who adorned this office in the past and left behind a proud legacy for posterity.

Shri Ganti Mohana Chandra Balayogi joined this illustrious line of Presiding Officers when he was elected Speaker of the Twelfth Lok Sabha on 24 March 1998. The election of Balayogi as Speaker is, indeed, a precedent setting event in many respects. It is for the first time in the history of free India that a Dalit leader has been elected to the Chair. It is also for the first time that a member belonging to a regional party has become the Speaker of Lok Sabha. Thirdly, it is also for the first time that a person born in Republican India has presided over the Lok Sabha, which made him the youngest Speaker of the largest democracy in the world.

Balayogi was born on 1 October 1951 to Shri Ganniyya and Smt. Satyamma, an agricultural family in the tiny village of Yedurulanka, right on the banks of the mighty and majestic Godavari river in the Konaseema

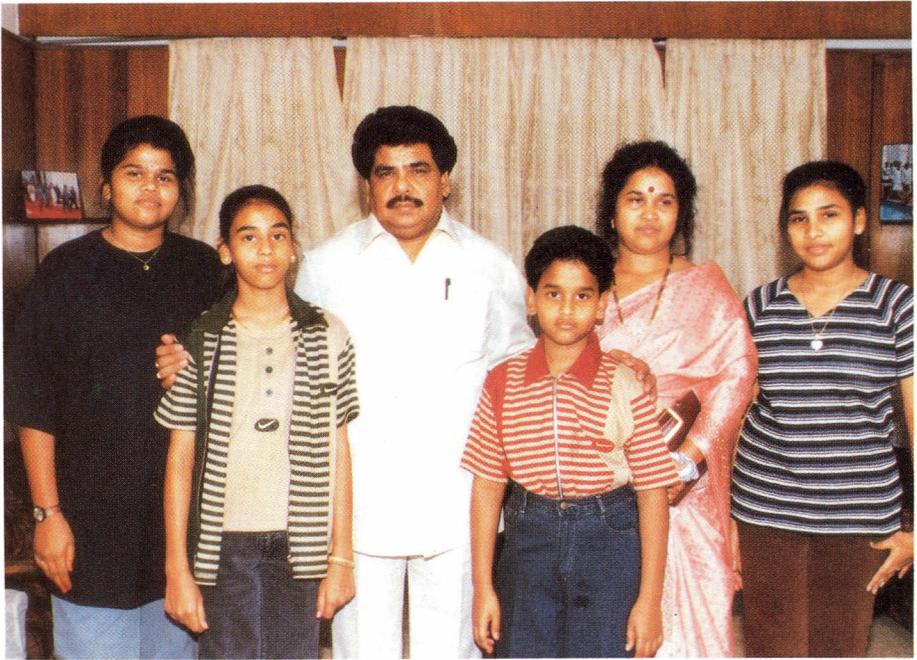
region of East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. He is second among three children with a sister above and a brother below. Married to Vijaya Kumari in 1982, he has three daughters and a son.

Balayogi had his primary education at Guttenadivi village as there was no school in his native place. He completed collegiate education in Kakinada before moving on to the Andhra University at Waltair where he pursued Post-Graduation in Political Science and Graduation in Law.

Armed with a Masters and a Law Degree, Balayogi started his legal career at the Bar in Kakinada in 1980 under the guidance of Shri Gopaldaswamy Shetty. In 1985, he crossed over to the bench when he was selected as a First Class Magistrate. But he resigned from the service and returned to the Bar to resume legal practice in Kakinada. Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh came under the sway of the "NTR wave" in 1982 when N.T. Rama Rao, matinee idol of the masses, entered politics and formed the Telugu Desam Party. At that time, many young and educated Andhraites were moved by the wave and Balayogi too enrolled himself as an activist of the newly formed party. Political recognition and responsibility came to him early enough when he took over as the Vice-Chairman of the Cooperative Town Bank of Kakinada in 1986. Since then, he has never looked back as opportunities have come to knock at his door regularly. In 1987, he was elected Chairman of the East Godavari Zilla Praja Parishad. He remained in this position till 1991 when political fortune pushed him for a higher position that very same year.

Balayogi's foray into Parliament began in 1991 when he contested from the Amalapuram constituency on a Telugu Desam Party (TDP) ticket and was elected to the Tenth Lok Sabha for the first time. In the 1996 General Elections, however, Balayogi lost his seat. The defeat did not daunt his spirit and he continued to work with great dynamism and firm determination to serve the people. He was soon elected to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in a by-election from the Mummdivaram Assembly constituency. Subsequently, he became Minister of Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh. As Minister, he made sincere efforts to streamline and strengthen the educational system in tune with his view that the type of education imparted should correspond with the social tasks, political realities and economic challenges to be faced by the educated youth in a developing society like ours.

Whatever position Balayogi held, he believed that work should speak about the person rather than the person speaking about his work. Believing in the Biblical adage that good makes no noise and noise does no good, Balayogi went about his work with quite efficiency and quite efficacy in the



With his family members

discharge of his duties, whether as a member of Parliament, member of Legislative Assembly, Minister in the Government, or as Chairman of the Zilla Praja Parishad in the late '80s. He holds the view that those engaged in public life have a special responsibility in upholding ethical norms and moral values. In conformity with this conviction, Balayogi voluntarily resigned as Minister of Higher Education, owning moral responsibility when a controversy broke out on the leakage of question papers of the Intermediate Public Examination, a plus two level course, in the State. He was widely acclaimed for the courage of conviction and adherence to values he showed by his gesture. However, his resignation was not accepted by the Chief Minister who reposed faith in his Minister's integrity and Balayogi continued his work in higher education.

Right from the beginning of his political career, Balayogi worked hard and devoted himself to the service of the masses. His commitment to serve the poor and the downtrodden and his interest in rural development, especially the development of Konaseema have been well recognised by the people and have significantly contributed to his rise as a leader. He has laid a firm foundation to his political philosophy at the grassroot level during his tenure as Chairman of the East Godavari Zilla Praja Parishad. He endeared himself to the people through various activities and programmes during that five-year-tenure as head of the district Panchayat.

Election as Speaker of Lok Sabha

In the General Elections held in 1998, Balayogi contested from his old seat, Amalapuram, as a T.D.P. candidate and got elected to Lok Sabha for the second time with a comfortable majority of over 90,000 votes. Balayogi's work in the constituency stood him in good stead and contributed to his easy victory. His initiative and endeavour in reaching the sufferers of the 'blow out' incident at Pasarlapudi in 1995 and the victims of cyclonic tragedy in Konaseema in 1996 were not forgotten by the people. When he was elected to Lok Sabha, he was Minister of Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh . Destiny willed him to hold a higher position in national politics and with the support of the ruling coalition he emerged as the successful candidate for the Speakership of Lok Sabha.

When the time came to take up the matter of the election of Speaker on 24 March 1998, it was the Prime Minister himself who moved the motion seeking the election of Balayogi as Speaker and the motion was seconded by the Home Minister. When the motion was put to vote, it was adopted by the House with a voice vote and Balayogi was declared elected as the Speaker of the Twelfth Lok Sabha.

Balayogi was warmly felicitated on his election to the august office of the Speaker by the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, Leaders of Parties and Groups and others. Congratulating Balayogi, the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee said: 'it is a matter of great pride that in the fiftieth anniversary of our Independence, an honourable member belonging to the Scheduled Castes has occupied the post of Speaker and as such his election to the august office is symbolic of the changing era'. The Leader of Opposition, Shri Sharad Pawar felt sure that Balayogi's experience of the last many years in public life would guide him in conducting the business of the House. Expressing his firm belief that Balayogi would be able to discharge his onerous duties with distinction, Shri Somnath Chatterjee wished him a brilliant tenure as the Speaker. Joining the felicitations, the outgoing Speaker, Shri P.A. Sangma hoped that Balayogi's reflexes and decisions would be impacted by the wisdom flowing from his grassroot experience. Shri Ram Vilas Paswan felt that with Balayogi's election, the office of Speaker would remain safe due to his simplicity, friendliness and soft spokenness.

Welcoming Balayogi's election Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav expressed the belief that he would protect the members' rights and give opportunities to the back benchers to raise their problems. Shri Lalu Prasad congratulated Balayogi and assured him of full cooperation. Felicitating his long time friend, Shri K. Yerranaidu of the Telugu Desam Party appealed to all members and political parties to cooperate with Balayogi in conducting the proceedings of the House in a dignified manner as envisaged in the Constitution. Shri Shivraj Patil, former Speaker, said that the situation in the House is such that unless every member cooperates with the Chair, the task will become quite difficult. Shri Murasoli Maran expressed happiness over the fact that Balayogi belonged to a regional party and came from the oppressed sections of society. Shri Navin Patnaik said that the House had found the most competent person in Balayogi to preside over it and assured him full cooperation in the days to come.

Replying to the felicitations showered on him, Balayogi *inter alia* said:

Honourable members, I am conscious of the responsibility bestowed on me as the Presiding Officer of this august House. I have always believed in the concept of 'collective wisdom'. I shall always be guided by this faith in discharging my duties. The institution of 'Speaker' has acquired great character and strength over the years due to the significant contributions of my worthy predecessors. This institution has moved from strength to strength on the force of the conventions and the highest traditions, while at the same time addressing itself to the new challenges based on the collective wisdom of honourable members.

Balayogi, the Speaker

Thus began Balayogi's tenure as Speaker of the Twelfth Lok Sabha. The composition of this House was quite complex in that no party had a clear majority while nearly forty parties had representatives in the House. Of these, nineteen parties had a single digit representation while twelve parties had a single member representation. The House had the distinction of having the services of some of the most formidable names on the political firmament. There were three former Prime Ministers, six former Governors and eighteen former Chief Ministers besides a host of former Ministers, Judges and other dignitaries, which obviously made it quite an awesome body to preside over. Yet, Balayogi conducted himself and the House with honour and grace, thereby earning rich encomiums from one and all.

Balayogi took keen interest in his role as Speaker which involves a lot of activity other than presiding over the House. The Speaker gives guidance to Parliamentary Committees and is the *ex officio* Chairman of the Business Advisory Committee, the Rules Committee and the General Purposes Committee. The Speaker is also *ex officio* President of the Indian Parliamentary Group and the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies. The Speaker has to lead Parliamentary Delegations to foreign countries, meet high dignitaries during such visits and help build understanding and goodwill through parliamentary diplomacy on a people-to-people basis. He also has to receive visiting Parliamentary Delegations and play host to them. Besides, the Speaker has to attend global meets like the Inter-Parliamentary Conference, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, the SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians Conference, etc., and build rapport with the Presiding Officers of other Parliaments. Also, the Speaker plays a prominent role in the All India Presiding Officers Conference held annually.

The Speaker is a much sought after constitutional dignitary at public functions all over the country, which he would generally attend and address the audience on a wide range of subjects such as agriculture, culture, development, education, economy, environment, philosophy, politics, religion, spiritualism, science and technology, etc. Therefore, he ought to have a fair degree of understanding on a host of issues as he is expected to address the public wherever he goes. Add to this the responsibility of looking after the welfare of his own constituency which returned him to the House. It is, indeed, a high pressure job which makes umpteen demands on the incumbent, thereby making his life extremely busy.

Balayogi has handled these responsibilities with aptitude and finesse. He has travelled widely all over the world as well as in India, quietly attending to his various obligations with patience and perseverance. While visiting Morocco, leading a Parliamentary Delegation, Balayogi was honoured with a decoration "WISSAM ALAOUITE OF THE ORDER OF GRAND OFFICER". While leading Parliamentary Delegations abroad, he addressed the Russian State Duma and the Turkish Grand National Assembly. All this he has done even while remaining close to his constituency which he tenders with love and care. He has fully stood up to the faith reposed in him by the House, with courage, conviction, dynamism and humility. Thus, he joins the ranks of his illustrious predecessors who have adorned the office and strengthened parliamentary institutions and traditions with their varied contributions.

One of Balayogi's acts of lasting significance as Speaker is the appointment of the seniormost officer of the Lok Sabha Secretariat as Secretary-General, Lok Sabha. The Secretary-General is a key official who plays a very significant role in aiding and advising the Speaker. In our Constitutional scheme, the Parliament Secretariats are visualised as autonomous institutions, independent of the Executive and functioning under the authority of the Presiding Officers. It has been a tradition to appoint the seniormost officer of the Secretariat as Secretary-General, a tradition that is consistent with the constitutional scheme of parliamentary supremacy over the Executive authority.

Balayogi, being fully aware of the work done by his illustrious predecessors like Vithalbhai Patel and G.V. Mavalankar in the matter of ensuring independence of the Legislature Secretariat, showed great wisdom and upheld the autonomy of the Secretariat by restoring the time tested tradition of appointing the seniormost officer of the Secretariat as the Secretary-General of Lok Sabha. He showed foresight and maturity by consulting leaders of political parties and securing a broad approval from across the political spectrum to his decision. In this, as in many other respects, Balayogi's legacy as Speaker is unique and historic in the annals of our parliamentary democracy.

Balayogi, the person

Suave, soft spoken and mild mannered by nature, Balayogi is a person who takes pride in making himself accessible to the people at large. This is evidenced by his readiness to attend functions small and big alike. A man blessed with indefatigable energy, he can be on the move the whole day and yet remain fresh, alert and agile. His proximity to the people led to a close association with various social and cultural organisations and activities, particularly in the Konaseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

Balayogi works for the uplift of the poor and the downtrodden and he has a special interest in the development of rural areas in the Godavari delta. He has been instrumental in efforts towards solving the drinking water problem in villages and improving communication and transport facilities and providing employment to teachers and legal heirs of deceased government employees. Balayogi is not a man of words but of work. He says: 'I am committed to the principle of doing an honest and efficient job without attracting unnecessary attention. The work one does must be felt by the people concerned than be read in newspaper columns by people unconcerned. This has been my philosophy'.

PART II
HIS VIEWS

I

CONSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL, PARLIAMENTARY
AND POLITICAL ISSUES

PARLIAMENT—PULSE OF THE NATION*

I take this opportunity to heartily congratulate all the respected members elected to the Twelfth Lok Sabha. I particularly compliment all of you for furthering the cause of democracy by participating in the elections with the true spirit of democracy. I also compliment all those who have contested in the elections but could not make it to this august House, for their contribution is no less. It is time for all of us to leave behind the memories of the electoral contest and strive collectively to live up to the expectations of the people who have given us the mandate.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and humility that I assume the office of the Speaker of the Twelfth Lok Sabha. I sincerely thank the honourable members for this honour. I am hopeful that the demands of the duty will be made lighter by the active co-operation of all the honourable members.

I need not remind the honourable members of the socio-political transformation that our country is undergoing. Over the years, the composition of the august House is also changing, reflecting the socio-political transformation. This august House has always endeavoured sincerely to fulfil the mandate given to it through the honourable members. I am particularly conscious of the composition of the Twelfth Lok Sabha and the expectations that flow out of it. Our democracy has successfully faced several challenges. This august House has withstood the test of the time and emerged as a pioneering institution upholding the democratic and social values and the philosophy enshrined in the Constitution.

Dear members, the Twelfth Lok Sabha has got the people's mandate to launch our country into the next millennium. This is a unique responsibility bestowed on this august House. As a constituent of the Legislature for the Union and as its distinguished members, we have an important responsibility to shoulder at this crucial time. Since Independence, our country has made

*On the floor of the House after assuming office as Speaker of the Twelfth Lok Sabha (24 March 1998).

impressive gains and still there is much to be done. Legislature is an effective vehicle of change. Honourable members have an important role to perform in pioneering the process of change and guiding the destiny of our nation. We have a solemn responsibility of ensuring that the constructive energies of our people and the Government are effectively channelised towards fulfilling the aspirations of our nation.

Honourable members, I am conscious of the responsibility bestowed on me as the Presiding Officer of this august House. I have always believed in the concept of 'collective wisdom'. I shall always be guided by this faith in discharging my duties. The institution of 'Speaker' has acquired great character and strength over the years due to the significant contributions of my worthy predecessors. This institution has moved from strength to strength on the force of the conventions and the highest traditions, while at the same time addressing itself to the new challenges based on the collective wisdom of honourable members. I particularly recall the contribution of my worthy immediate predecessor Shri P.A. Sangma in this regard. His goodwill and counsel shall be a source of great strength to me.

In my view, the Presiding Officer is as important as the first and the last member of this House. This august House has the benefit of drawing upon the vast experience of its senior members and moulding and guiding the new. The spirit of co-operation for collective good is the essence of democracy. I shall endeavour to ensure that this spirit prevails all through. I shall do my best to uphold the true democratic traditions and defend the privileges of this august House and its honourable members. Parliament is the conscience keeper of our nation and reflects the sovereign will of the people of India. As a constituent of the Parliament, the responsibilities of this august House and its honourable members are manifold. It shall be my utmost effort to ensure that these responsibilities are discharged in the best possible manner. The Presiding Officer is always guided by the sense of justice and fair play.

I am grateful to the honourable members for their warm expressions about me and for assuring me their co-operation. I particularly seek the co-operation of the Leader of the House and Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji and the Leader of the Opposition, Shri Sharad Pawarji and all the members in the direction of this august House making a durable contribution to realise the ideals and goals enshrined in the Golden Jubilee Resolution adopted by the Parliament. Any institution is as good as its members choose to make it. We shall collectively endeavour to set new standards and reach higher levels of consciousness. I am confident that we will be able to live up to the expectations. Let us join our hands in heralding a new era and the new millennium.

G.V. MAVALANKAR—THE FATHER OF LOK SABHA*

I feel honoured in having been called upon by the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies to preside over this function organised in the context of the Fifth G.V. Mavalankar Memorial Lecture being delivered by our respected former President, Shri R. Venkataraman.

Dada Saheb Mavalankar, as this distinguished gathering would know, was the last President of the Central Legislative Assembly of British times. As he became the President of the Assembly in 1946, he had the distinction of being elected, defeating a member nominated by the Government. In 1947, he came to preside over the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) which later became the Provisional Parliament of India in 1950. In 1952, he was elected as the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha. He held this position with great distinction until he died in 1956. Thus, he was a vital link, as Presiding Officer of the national legislative body during the transition of India from a dependent nation to an independent Republic. He cast the Lok Sabha into the mould of one of the most well-organised popular chambers of the world.

Shri Mavalankar was a Congressman. He did not resign from his party on becoming Speaker, unlike his predecessor Shri Vithalbhai Patel. However, he established the tradition of the Speaker not being active in his party and not taking any public posture, particularly on matters likely to be controversial.

In our country, we have not yet developed the convention of not setting up candidates in electoral contests against Speakers. Again, it is a fact that at least at the level of the States holding the office of the Speaker is not regarded as having the same prestige as occupying a Ministerial office. Of course, once elected as Speaker, the incumbent is respected as a prestigious functionary. Given the option between being a Speaker and a Minister, the preference is often for the latter. This is a matter of value judgement.

*At the Mavalankar Memorial Lecture, New Delhi (7 December 1998).

Often, persons who have been Speakers also seek office as Ministers or Governors subsequently. This is because Speakership has not come to be regarded as having the status of an ultimate office. This is not to say that persons who have once been Speakers should not be given placements in higher offices.

In this context, healthy conventions have to be developed to vest the office of the Speaker, including in the State Assemblies, with prestige that is consistent with the position it occupies in the Warrant of Precedence. Here it is worthwhile for us to recall what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once observed:

The Speaker represents the House. He represents the dignity of the House, the freedom of the House and because the House represents the nation, in a particular way, the Speaker becomes the symbol of the nation's freedom and liberty. Therefore, it is right that that should be an honoured position....

In the context of governance through coalition, the office of the Speaker comes under strain. Sometimes, the Executive, not being in a position to harmonise its concerns with those of the Opposition because of the multiplicity of parties in the House, tends to shift its burden on to the Presiding Officer. This trend can be avoided only by developing expertise for floor management amongst the political parties in legislative bodies.

The framers of our Constitution, including Mavalankar, have done much to study parliamentary practices elsewhere in the world and have given us a proud legacy of several institutions. It is for us to safeguard and preserve these institutions and promote their growth. One surest way of doing this is to ensure that these constitutionally devised institutions are always kept filled up without avoidable delays, by active and vibrant individuals. Manning these institutions should essentially be above political considerations.

An area in respect of which significant contributions were made by Mavalankar relates to the privileges and financial autonomy of Parliament. While we have, over the years, had lot of experience in the scrutiny of privilege issues, there needs to be a lot more understanding of the law of privileges among our legislators. The basic principle of privileges is that they should relate to the business of the House. Unfortunately this is often lost sight of, and these days, privilege-related correspondence frequently flows from issues and occurrences outside the House, not connected with the business of the House as such.

While our Parliament enjoys financial autonomy, this is not necessarily true of our State legislative bodies. There is a widespread complaint from the Presiding Officers of State legislative bodies about Executive control over their finances. There is a need for a review in this respect in order to accord financial autonomy to these bodies.

For effectively securing the accountability of the Executive to Parliament, Shri Mavalankar had done much by establishing a Committee System. Over the years, we have further built upon this system. Now we have several Departmentally Related Standing Committees which are Joint Committees of both Houses. Their professional expertise in holding the Government to account should be further strengthened.

In the application of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the House, Shri Mavalankar demonstrated exceptional objectivity and never made any distinction between members belonging to the Government and the Opposition. This tradition has been maintained over the years, as reflected by a large body of rulings given by successive Speakers. And, the finality of the decisions of the Speakers has become a rule and is accepted as a matter of course. It is, indeed, this basic tradition which makes our parliamentary system work.

In early 1956, Mavalankar became the first non-white to be elected as Chairman of the General Council of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). Today, whether it be in the CPA or in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, member States draw upon the parliamentary experience of India evolved over the years in Mavalankar's tradition.

Shri Venkataraman Saheb has seen our parliamentary system in operation from the level of Vice-President and President of our country for eight long years from 1984 to 1992, not to speak of his experience in earlier years as member of the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly and as member of our Parliament. I compliment the Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies in having organised the Fifth Mavalankar Memorial Lecture by Shri Venkataramanji. I also compliment Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha for his initiative.

Thank you.

CHALLENGES BEFORE PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY*

I welcome you all to this 62nd All India Conference of the Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies.

Since the last Conference, we have gone through yet another General Election. And, the Twelfth Lok Sabha is in position. This time we have the presence of 40 political parties in the House. Yet another coalition has come to power at the Centre. Coalitions do involve management of contradictions—harmonization of competing interests of alliance partners. By now, we have had some significant experience with coalitions at the Centre as well as in the States. Political education comes from experience and this is also a continuous process. The need of the times is to reconcile the interests of stability needed for socio-economic development of our people with the political dynamics inherent in governance through coalition. In the process of this reconciliation, Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies have to play a crucial role.

In this background, the first item on the agenda of the Conference, that is, "Need to review the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution" assumes special significance.

The Tenth Schedule, as all of you would know, is commonly known as the anti-defection law. This law was established by the Constitution (Fifty-second Amendment) Act, 1985. The Government which enacted this law was a majoritarian Government and it did take into consideration, for the purpose of law, the political experience till then, of over three decades. The principal objective of the law was one of outlawing defections, that is, the tendency on the part of the legislators to switch loyalties from one party to another, resulting in frequent floor-crossing. After practising the anti-defection law for thirteen years, strong reservations are being expressed by political leaders and jurists about it. This would mainly seem to be for the reason that the law has not achieved its objective. It is a fact of life that

*At the 62nd Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, New Delhi (22 September 1998).

defections have not been "outlawed". Rather, defections have taken place legally. Legal or illegal, defections have impacted on the stability of Governments and have gone with a number of undesirable practices.

Indeed there are several ambiguities and lacunae about the anti-defection law. So, interpretation of the law becomes difficult and has not also been uniform. Controversies have arisen in regard to the manner of verifying splits in political parties; time from which splits become effective; conclusiveness of splits; engineered splits; voluntary withdrawal of membership; consequences of expulsion of members from political parties, etc. Presiding Officers also get involved in controversies because of different interpretations given by them in the application of the various provisions of the anti-defection law. In this context, there is even a suggestion that matters relating to splits and mergers of parties are best left to the Election Commission. In any case, the Supreme Court has ruled that decisions on the application of the anti-defection law are subject to judicial review.

Now there are media reports that the Law Commission has submitted a working paper to Government and also circulated it among MPs and certain organisations, recommending, *inter alia*, that a member elected on a party ticket shall remain with that party until dissolution of the House. This recommendation would virtually mean, if accepted and implemented, that the anti-defection law will have to be scrapped. I am sure that there would be a nation-wide debate on this matter. I hope that in this Conference, the Presiding Officers would go into all the aspects of the anti-defection law and arrive at findings based on their up-to-date experience. These findings could constitute significant inputs for final decisions to be taken by the Government and the Parliament.

The second important subject that is going to be discussed in this Conference is the form of procedures and management of time of the House. As the Presiding Officers would know, under articles 118 and 208 of the Constitution, each House of the Parliament and of State Legislatures may establish their own Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business. The Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, due to obvious historical reasons, have been impacted by the Rules of the British Parliament. When our country became free, our Parliament started with a body of Rules which was largely an adaptation from those of the Central Legislative Assembly of pre-Independence times. No doubt, the Rules have also been constantly evolving in the context of new experiences. By and large, the Rules of the State Legislatures are also modelled on the Rules of the Parliament. The treatise *Practice and Procedure of Parliament* brought out by the Lok Sabha Secretariat (popularly referred to as Kaul and Shakhdher) is, indeed, a reference

document for all legislative bodies in India. This publication is being updated from time to time reflecting the latest developments in the Lok Sabha, including the Rulings of the Speakers on issues arising from time to time. The Directions of the Speaker of Lok Sabha issued in pursuance of Rule 398 of the Rules of Procedure are also very crucial on matters of detailed procedures. The Constitutional provisions, Rules of Procedure and the Directions of the Speaker constitute the discipline within the framework of which the Lok Sabha functions. The already existing broad uniformity in rules of procedure of the State legislative bodies *vis a vis* those of the Lok Sabha could be reviewed and updated every year by a two-way process of consultation. The legislative wings of the Parliament and of the State legislative bodies should work in synergy.

In framing the Rules, the broad objectives that should be borne in mind are:

- That the accountability of the Executive to the Legislature is maximised;
- That, in any case, the Executive is not interfered with in its day-to-day functions;
- That matters which are under adjudication and judicial and constitutional functionaries are not brought under scrutiny, except as provided under the Constitution and laws established by the Parliament;
- That the privileges of the parliamentarians and the dignity and authority of the Houses are duly safeguarded;
- That, in the conduct of the business of the House, a thoughtful system of Committees facilitates consensus building and collective decision-making—of course, under the conclusive and final authority of the Presiding Officer;
- That the access to the media is liberally facilitated, so that there is transparency in respect of what goes on in the legislative bodies except to the extent to limitations that may be dictated by considerations of secrecy; and
- Operation of the Rules is cost-effective.

As far as I see, with my experience in the Parliament and in Andhra Pradesh, the problem is not really in the regime of Rules of Procedure. Rather, it is in their compliance, particularly in the area of time management which

is the central and most crucial factor for the efficient functioning of the legislative bodies.

Keeping in view the limitations of time in every Session and every sitting of the legislative bodies, fairly tight Rules of Procedure have been established for operating various parliamentary devices—Question Hour, Half-an-Hour Discussions, Adjournment Motions, Substantive Motions, Short Duration Discussions, Calling Attention Motions, No-Confidence Motions, Private Members' Resolutions, Petitions from the public, etc. Allocation of time is usually decided by the Business Advisory Committee.

However, in practice, time allocated by the Business Advisory Committee is not always conformed to. Discussions during the Question Hour turn out to be long drawn out. Only a few Starred Questions are replied to. Time consumed on Short Duration Discussions often does not have any relation to the maximum time limit fixed. More importantly, in the name of emergent matters of public importance, even listed items of business get postponed from day to day. These trends have a cascading effect getting reflected in late night sittings. Even consideration of Demands for Grants get guillotined. Party leaders, Chief Whips and legislators should cooperate and subject themselves to strict time discipline. Members of the legislative bodies, particularly new comers and juniors, entertain serious grievances in regard to opportunities given to them in time allotment for meaningful participation in serious proceedings. Parties have a tendency to allocate the lion's share of the time given to them to seniors or old timers. This trend is not conducive to maintenance of discipline in the Houses as well as in the respective political parties themselves. On equitable distribution of time amongst members also, it is for the parties in the House to play the appropriate role.

Members of legislative bodies should also be given necessary orientation training in studying the subjects of debate and presenting their thoughts in an organised and time-effective manner with due concern for the time needs of their colleagues.

This is not the first time that the agenda items of today's Conference are being considered by the Presiding Officers. But, these are subjects which need to be discussed repetitively to share experiences and for the legislators to be effective. It is like the same physical exercises being done again and again for the human body to be kept trim and active.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this 62nd Conference of the Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India.

PUBLIC LIFE AND THE NEED FOR A CODE OF CONDUCT*

It gives me immense pleasure to associate myself with the inauguration of the Seminar on "Ethical and Moral Values in Public Life" being organised by the Andhra Pradesh Legislature Secretariat and the East Godavari District Administration. At the outset, I would like to thank the organisers for providing me this opportunity to share my views with you on this important subject which is engaging public attention now-a-days.

In a democratic country like India, where there are different levels of governance involving a large number of public functionaries, the observance of moral standards and norms in the conduct of public affairs becomes a difficult task. It is the perception of people on the presence of venality in public life and what is wrong and what is right in politics, which determine their faith in a democratic system. People expect the persons in public life to conform to certain ethical and moral standards.

Friends, the potential damage and threat to the political fabric of a system do not depend on the character of the government only. History shows that no nation is immune to the corrosive evil of corruption. The ethical dimension of how influential and powerful people conduct themselves in private life and the public domain provides a model for the general public and groups in society to emulate. The moral basis for the unity and stability of society demands that ethical restraints must operate not only in respect of individuals but also organised groups such as industry, business, trade associations, labour unions and political parties. The all-pervading and inter-locking nature of ethics in public life has to be comprehended in all its manifestations and dimensions.

Ethical and moral standards may transcend the narrow stipulation of law or a rule book and code of regulation—many acts of omission or commission may not violate the law as such but may run counter to the norms of propriety,

*At a Seminar on "Ethical and Moral Values in Public Life" organised by the Andhra Pradesh Legislature Secretariat and East Godavari District Administration, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh (14 February 1999).

fairness, intellectual integrity, accountability and societal expectations. It is because of this that in public life, be it politics or administration, the use, non-use, misuse or abuse of authority assumes importance.

Needless to say, faith of the people in the ethical and moral behaviour of those in public life is vitally important. It bridges the gap between the general public and those in public life. Ethical behaviour is partly a matter of civilisational legacy and partly a product of personal philosophy. But, it is certainly a social imperative if any society is to have an equilibrium, conducive to social cohesiveness and good life. In fact, ethical or moral conduct in public life has wider and positive dimensions and implications.

It goes without saying that in a parliamentary democracy, people are the real masters and all institutions and procedures are merely means to serve them. Democracy survives on the strength of the people. It is a system which requires a sense of social responsibility on the part of the people as well as their elected representatives.

In order to maintain high traditions in parliamentary life, legislators are expected to observe certain standards of conduct, both inside the House and outside it. It is in this context that the concept of ethics and standards for legislators assumes relevance and significance. The legislators, therefore, must have an abiding faith in the primacy of moral values and ethical conduct in public life. They should set an example and be the torch-bearers for the masses. Since legislators are accountable to the people, they must keep in touch with them. They should never ignore the people who have elected them and whom they have to approach again.

It is well recognised that the conduct of legislators should not be contrary to the rules or derogatory to the dignity of the House or in any way inconsistent with the standards which Parliament is entitled to expect of its members. The House has the right to punish its members for any misconduct. It exercises its jurisdiction of scrutiny over its members for their conduct, whether it takes place inside or outside the House. It has also the power to punish its members for disorderly conduct and other contempts, whether committed within the House or beyond its walls.

In our elections, money power has become a very crucial factor. Huge donations are received by political parties from various sources. Such donations have the potential for unethical practices. The political party which receives substantial financial assistance for electoral expenses from persons, associations, industrial and business concerns, etc. would definitely be under an obligation to its donors. The grim fact that these donors would in all

likelihood extract their pound of flesh, cannot be wished away. The unhealthy aspects of money power in elections and the increase in electoral expenses adversely affect the very fabric of our democratic set up. We must endeavour to check this malaise.

The credibility of institutions like Parliament and the integrity of its members are imperative for the success of democracy; hence the relevance of ethics and codes of conduct and standards for legislators and other public officials. In a mature democracy like ours recent initiatives in this direction are but logical. The setting up of a Committee on Ethics by the Rajya Sabha is a step in this direction.

Those who are in public life should epitomise principles, ideals and values like honesty, integrity, etc. The interests of the nation and of the common people should be the top priority for them. The principle of accountability in respect of all public offices has to be enforced. It is obvious that a system in which public power is distributed without insistence on proper accountability would lead to unhealthy practices in public life.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Seminar. I hope that the deliberations of this Seminar would be enlightening the people about the urgency of practising ethical and moral values in all walks of life, especially while performing duties at the place of work. It is very important for legislators to set an example of high standards of morality for the masses.

Thank you.

ELECTORAL REFORMS—A NEW PERSPECTIVE*

Having completed fifty years of our experience in democracy, it is only appropriate that we deliberate on electoral reforms based on our shared experiences.

The primary issue in electoral reform concerns the system of representation. Indeed, the system of representation is crucial to democracy. How democratic is a popular chamber is dependent on how representative of the people it is. In our country, the system of representation is the majoritarian system—what is known as the First-Past-the-Post system. The winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than any other candidate, but not necessarily a majority of votes. But this system causes serious distortions between popular votes and seats in the elected bodies. Parties having larger share of seats do not necessarily have to their credit larger percentage of total popular votes. The Congress Party, over 12 General Elections, has held seats in the Lok Sabha ranging from 25.3 per cent to 77 per cent while the votes gained by it ranged from 25.7 per cent to 47.8 per cent. During 1977, the Janata Party and allies held 54 per cent of the seats but had gained only 41.3 per cent of the votes. In the present Lok Sabha, the BJP holds 33 per cent of seats with 25.5 per cent of the votes. In fact, in the case of smaller parties like the CPI and CPI(M), which have held smaller number of seats, the percentages of their seat share and vote share have been quite very close.

This kind of vote-seat distortion which is a serious inadequacy in the majoritarian system of representation can be avoided if we opt for the proportional representation system, that is the List System under which people vote for parties which, in turn, receive seats in proportion to their vote share. Many European countries—Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Italy,

*At the Symposium on "Electoral Reforms", following the 62nd Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, New Delhi (24 September 1998).

Switzerland, the Netherlands, etc.—follow this system. There is also another variant of this System—a combination of majoritarian and List Systems. Examples are Russia and Germany.

Are we in a position in our country to opt for these comparatively more representative systems? Or, should we confine ourselves to our present majoritarian system, considering that it is the simplest system which can be easily understood by the vast masses of our voters who are illiterate? The majoritarian system is voter-centric while the proportional system is party-centric. Is it desirable, in our present circumstances, to give precedence and predominance to parties over voters? It is gathered that out of 211 countries in the world having representative system, 68 countries follow the majoritarian system and 66 proportional system.

All the parties are agreed in principle to provide reservation for women in legislative bodies. They are yet to come to an agreement on modalities of providing representation to them. In our society, which is highly male-dominated with strong societal practices of discrimination against women, it is desirable that we find an early solution to the problem of women's representation to enhance the representative character of our legislative bodies.

According to the basic framework of articles 81 and 82 of the Constitution, allotment of seats in the Lok Sabha to each State and delimitation of constituencies should be in proportion to population and should be readjusted with reference to decennial census figure. As a result of the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, the allotment of seats in Lok Sabha to States, done on the basis of the 1971 population figures, shall remain frozen till the first census takes place after the year 2000. Our population in 1971 was 548 million. The population, as of today, is estimated to be 960 million. Between 1971 and today, population has increased by 412 million, that is, by 75 per cent. Not adjusting the Lok Sabha seats and constituencies with reference to this massive growth of population, does have very serious implications for the representative character of our democracy as well as the balance of its foundation. We should realise, in this context, that the average electorate size ranges between slightly over two lakhs in Sikkim and over one million in Rajasthan. I am not mentioning about Union territories, the electorate sizes of which are much lesser.

Population has also been growing rather unevenly in different parts of the country. If the existing system of allocation of the Lok Sabha seats to States and, delimitation of constituencies based on population are to continue without modifications, will we not be rewarding States with low performance in population control and punishing those with good performance? Does this

not have serious implications for equitable political participation by the people in different parts of the country and, therefore, for our federal polity and the very unity and integrity of our country?

Conduct of free and fair elections is as important as a system of representation. In order to ensure free and fair elections, the Constitution provides, under article 324, for the constitution of an independent Election Commission. Considering the enormous powers and high profile that the Commission has come to assume, particularly of late, it is desirable that the President appoints the Commission based not merely on the proposals of the Government but in consultation with the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of the Opposition.

The Election Commission of India has established in 1996 an up-to-date Model Code of Conduct for the guidance of political parties and candidates. This is in terms of guidelines for parties, candidates and party in power as regards general conduct, meetings, processions, polling, general superintendence through observers, etc. The desirability and practicability of giving legal sanction for this code deserves to be examined.

From very early days since we started operating our electoral system, suggestions have been made that fresh elections should be conducted by non-party Governments. The late Shri Rajagopalachari used to recommend that the party in power should step down before fresh elections so that it does not have any unfair advantage over other parties. Will this be practicable? If there is to be short-term neutral Government to supervise the conduct of elections, the question arises as to how it should be formed. What is a non-party Government? Will it be a Government by civil servants? From whom will they take orders? Will it be a Government with special dispensation under the President or the Vice-President? If so, what should be that dispensation? What would be the constitutional amendments required?

Financing of elections is also an important aspect of electoral reforms. It is universally recognised that it would be unrealistic to expect democratic elections to be separated totally from the question of money. Financial contributions are, indeed, a legitimate form of political participation. What should, however, be ensured is that individuals or organisations with money power should not be permitted to exercise disproportionate arm controlling influence on the election of candidates. The financing systems should be transparent. Detailed ground rules should be established for disclosure of sources of funding.

Recently, there has been some enhancement of the ceiling of election expenses that candidates could incur. Our constituencies are geographically vast. Many of them have low transport and communication facilities. The electorates in individual constituencies are sometimes bigger than even the total population of some developed countries. Financing of elections, therefore, would still need to be rationalised so as to facilitate meaningful interface between candidates and voters. There are suggestions that there should be State funding of elections. In some of the developed countries where this practice exists, funding is linked to performance of parties in previous elections. Such an arrangement may not be easy for implementation in our multi-party system. There could be obvious complaints from smaller parties. We should go into equitable systems of State funding, consistent with our society and political culture.

In order to economise on election expenses, one suggestion often made and even practised in certain circumstances, is that Parliamentary and State Assembly elections be held simultaneously. Experience on ground has been that illiterate voters get confused and this results in voting for unintended candidates as well as invalid votings by them. Problems like this would have to be borne in mind while setting out organisational details.

The last four General Elections have thrown up hung Houses, that is, the Ninth to the Twelfth Lok Sabhas. Minority and Coalition Governments are increasingly becoming frequent. Governments based on coalition arrangements are also proving unstable. Mid-term elections are becoming frequent, causing burdens on account of recurrent election expenses. In this context, one of the suggestions that could be considered is to provide for a fixed term for the legislative bodies. In this context, the question of amending articles 83(2) and 172(1) of the Constitution could be examined.

Criminalisation of politics and its impact on electoral processes and outcome have been matters of public debate in our country for some time now. The Vohra Committee has reported on it. The Golden Jubilee Special Session of the Parliament has, *inter alia*, exhorted: "...All political parties shall undertake all such steps as will attain the objective of ridding our polity of criminalisation or its influence". In the context of the General Elections, 1998, the Election Commission repeatedly publicised in the media its intention to prevent access to electoral contests for persons with criminal background.

How does one define "persons with criminal background"? Is the scope of the definition only to include persons who have been convicted of criminal offences? If that be not so, is the scope of the definition such that it includes persons with general public reputation for criminality though they might not

have been convicted? How can such persons be debarred from electoral contests, as a person is construed to be innocent until proved otherwise in a court of law? Judicial processes being long drawn out in our country, how do we wait for judgment of Courts and still hope to speedily rid electoral contests of access by those who stand accused of crimes? Should any distinction be made between various kinds of offences for which convictions may have been given by Courts? Offences, indeed, are of various grades of gravity. Should persons convicted of certain offences which may not have been grave be exempt from denial of access to electoral contests? We have to go into all these aspects.

Firm legal provisions to prevent entry of persons with criminal background into electoral contests should be established and implemented. In this context, Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act may have to be significantly amended to exclude criminals from legislative bodies. At present, a person convicted for any offence for a period of not less than two years is disqualified. The provision in regard to disqualification of sitting members who are convicted is that it will not take effect till three months have lapsed from the date of convictions and until appeal against conviction, if any, is disposed of by the competent Court. Repeatedly, the Election Commission has been proposing to insist on appropriate affidavits from electoral contestants in regard to their background being free of criminality. It is desirable that in this regard there are overt legal provisions rather than weak or contestable procedural arrangements.

For sometime, there was lack of clarity regarding whether 'lawmakers' should be construed as "Public Servants" within the meaning of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (PCA). The judgement in the JMM case has been conclusive about this, and the lack of clarity in this regard has been eliminated, legislators having been brought within the ambit of Section 2(c) of the PCA. The judgement has further clarified that sanctions for prosecution under Section 19 of the PCA could be obtained from the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha or the Speaker of the Lok Sabha where members of Parliament are involved—that is, pending amendment of the Act. Urgent steps in this regard are required.

One sure method of preventing access of persons with public reputation for criminal background to electoral contests is for the political parties themselves to deny them tickets for contests. Experience shows that parties, because of political compulsions, more specifically on the ground of such persons being assessed as "winning candidates", end up giving them tickets. Even presuming that such persons may be denied tickets, there is nothing which can stop them, as on date, from contesting elections as independent

candidates. If such candidates get elected, they also try to sanctify their election and get respectability for themselves by arguing that people's verdict in their favour should be construed as absolving them of any criminal disposition or character. In post-election scenarios of hung Legislatures, such independent candidates assume considerable importance as well as on account of political arithmetic involved in the formation of Governments.

Articles 102 and 191 of the Constitution relating to the disqualification of members of the legislative bodies have been amended and amplified to include disqualifications under the anti-defection law. We have had a full-fledged discussion on the weaknesses of the anti-defection law itself in the Presiding Officers' Conference on 22 September 1998 and the Conference has called for a comprehensive review of the law. There has even been a strong demand that this law itself should be scrapped on account of its abuse, not to speak of disqualifications of members thereunder.

Of late, there have been serious complaints regarding the use of money power within the narrow confines of elections to the Rajya Sabha. Until 1913, members of the Senate in the United States were elected by the State Legislatures. Complaints of the nature now we are faced with became rampant. And, by the Seventeenth Amendment, the United States switched over to direct election of members of the Senate as well. Can we learn lessons from the American experience? Can we have direct elections for the Rajya Sabha as well?

I am aware that my address has been somewhat longer than I would have liked it to be. I anticipated your indulgence in order to put the various issues of electoral reforms in perspective.

Thank you for your kind attention. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Symposium.

IMPERATIVE OF DISCIPLINE AND DECORUM IN PARLIAMENT*

It is widely accepted that parliamentary democracy is a system of governance which has to evolve and grow taking into its fold the native realities and requirements. It necessarily involves certain broad parameters of working and envisages certain principles and policies of public ethics as its functioning base. The character and quality of parliamentary democracy depend very much on the quality and calibre of persons who man the representative bodies which are the supreme institutions in such politics. Their behaviour should be such as to enhance the dignity of Parliament and its members in general. The degree of esteem in which the people of a country hold its Parliament is a sure sign of the success and maturity of its democratic process.

With its rich and varied democratic heritage spanning millennia, India has been a crucible of many cultures and civilizations as also systems of governance. After achieving Independence, we opted for a parliamentary form of Government. Though parliamentary democracy, in its modern sense, has been in operation in our country for the last fifty years only, we have earned encomiums from far and wide as the world's largest working democracy. We have amply proved our inherent and inviolate democratic credentials by successfully conducting as many as twelve General Elections to the Lok Sabha and many more to the State Legislatures. In spite of many trials and tribulations, democracy has struck deep roots in our country.

Over the years, the face of the Indian Parliament has undergone a dramatic transformation reflecting the socio-political development of the nation as a whole. This has been so particularly in the case of the Lok Sabha, the popularly elected House, which in effect connotes the changing profile of the Indian electorate too. To begin with, one finds that the number of political parties represented in the Lok Sabha has been on the rise, especially in recent years. This corresponds with the proliferation of political parties and the

*Reproduced from *Key Issues*, Vol. 2, No. II, March 1999, pp. 3—12.

fragmentation of mainline political parties and the emergence of regional parties. Mergers and splits of political parties have become a recurring phenomenon in India's electoral politics. The Twelfth Lok Sabha has representatives from as many as 40 political parties as compared to 4 or 5 in the First Lok Sabha. Another important feature of the Twelfth Lok Sabha is the crucial role of the regional parties and single-member parties.

With successive Lok Sabhas, the educational background of its members has also changed considerably. Though our constitution does not stipulate any formal educational qualification for members of Parliament, it cannot be denied that educational accomplishments have a bearing on the behaviour of a person while conducting himself or herself in a public forum and the general trend in this regard shows that electors have favoured to return those who have had basic education and who could thereby articulate their problems and grievances more effectively in the supreme legislative organ of the land. In the Eleventh Lok Sabha, 77.3 per cent of the members had education of the level of graduation and above, whereas the corresponding figure for the First Lok Sabha was 58.4 per cent. The occupational background of the members has also been changing with the Lok Sabhas over the decades. In the First Lok Sabha, members with legal background outnumbered those belonging to other professions. In the Eleventh Lok Sabha, they were relegated to the third position behind political and social workers and agriculturists. This indeed is ample proof of a changing approach and attitude of the electorate in choosing their representatives. Their preference perhaps is indicative of the fact that they intend to send to Parliament, representatives who are grassroot workers, fully conversant with their problems, and who could place them before the national Government for early and expeditious redressal.

To play a meaningful role as members, it is necessary for them to have a proper perspective of the place of Parliament in our polity. As is said, Parliament is not a talking shop. It is visualized by the Constitution as an important instrument of socio-economic change. As such, it has to closely watch the functioning of the Government and influence its performance for social good. How do members articulate their views? In our Parliament, there are a number of devices available for members to raise matters of concern and they should make full use of it. While doing so, they should bear in mind that Parliament is not the forum to raise issues that are basically the concerns of State Governments for which the Legislative Assemblies are the proper fora. The issues raised in Parliament should have a wider significance to the society and the nation at large. Members must make full use of all the available opportunities and participate actively in the legislative, financial and other business of the House, bringing to bear their special

knowledge, experience and insights in the shaping of public policy and contributing their share in the oversight and scrutiny of performance of the Government and redressal of public grievances.

The Question Hour has a sanctity of its own as a primary device to call upon the Government to explain its actions and stand on a variety of subjects. This is a time when Government is put to a thorough scrutiny by Parliament. Members should, therefore, resist the temptation to demand the suspension of Question Hour to discuss matters of political interest.

An analysis of the time spent on various kind of business during the First to the Eleventh Lok Sabhas reveals that the Fifth Lok Sabha with 613 sittings recorded an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes per sitting followed by the Seventh Lok Sabha which devoted 7 hours and 9 minutes of average sitting. However, of late, there is a decline in the trend, and the average sitting of the Eleventh Lok Sabha was 6 hours and 30 minutes. A recent development in the functioning of the Lok Sabha which deserves the attention of all those concerned with the working of parliamentary system is the frequent adjournments of the House as a result of disorderly scenes and interruptions. Such disruptions have led to a loss of about 9.95 per cent of the time of the House during the Tenth Lok Sabha and 279 hours and 25 minutes of the time of the House were spent on interruptions and/or adjournments due to disorderly scenes. The image of the Parliament and its credibility as a representative institution largely depend on the role and functions of its members. The functioning of Parliament is a serious business and it ought to be conducted with a degree of dignity, decorum and sincerity.

Maintenance of order in the House is the fundamental duty of the Speaker. He is not only the moderator and facilitator of the sittings of the House, but is also the authority invested with the responsibility to help frame sound rules, practices, customs and conventions and thereby to evolve a healthy parliamentary culture. The Speaker derives his disciplinary powers from the Rules. He may, in his discretion, intervene when a member makes an unwarranted or defamatory remark by asking him to withdraw that remark or order the expunction of any defamatory or indecent words used in the debate. The Speaker may also order a member guilty of disorderly conduct to withdraw from the House, and name a member for suspension if the member disregards the authority of the Chair and persists in obstructing the proceedings of the House in case of grave disorder.

The proceedings, at times, become noisy leading to pandemonium and turmoil. This projects Parliament in a poor light, especially in view of the fact that the proceedings are now-a-days shown live on the television. Members

should refrain from the tendency to rush to the well of the House, raise slogans and create unruly scenes. As mentioned earlier, a lot of precious time of the House is wasted this way. It is equally important that members must imbibe the etiquette of Parliament. In the heat of the moment when passions run high, members sometimes tend to use unparliamentary language. There is, of course, a practice to expunge such remarks from records but it has to be borne in mind that with live telecasting, such expunction becomes infructuous as people would have already heard it. Pandit Nehru, an epitome of parliamentary decorum, once observed:

Democracy does not mean simply shouting loudly and persistently, though that might have occasionally some value. Freedom and democracy require responsibility and certain standards of behaviour and self-discipline.

Ironically, protests seem to attract greater media attention. At times, sensational news—noisy scenes, pandemonium, walkouts in the Houses of Parliament, etc.—are given front page coverage in the national dailies and important issues like legislative and financial business tend to get sidelined or are ignored. Media, being one of the pillars of democracy, has an educative role as well. If the media writes forcefully and accurately and gives importance to the real issues and significant matters and debates and deliberations in the Legislatures, it can become more effective and meaningful in its purpose.

Apart from the Committee of Privileges, which is there to inquire into cases of breaches of privilege of the House and its members, *ad hoc* Committees of the House have also been constituted from time to time to consider and investigate the conduct of members.

On 18 February 1963, five members of Parliament created disorder at the time of the President's Address to members of both Houses of Parliament assembled together. The next day, a Committee was appointed by the Speaker to report to the House of the disorderly conduct of the members.

The Committee, in their report, recommend that for any disorderly conduct by a member during the President's Address, he may be suspended from the service of the House for a period which may extend upto one year. Replying to the discussion on the Report of the Committee, Pandit Nehru remarked:

The sole question before us is—it is a highly important one and vital one—what rules and conventions we should establish for carrying on the work of this Parliament with dignity and effectiveness... Parliament is supposed not only to act correctly but lay down certain principles and conventions of decorous behaviour.

In 1971, when the President started reading his Address to both the Houses of Parliament, a member of Lok Sabha interrupted him and created disorder. The Committee constituted to look into the matter held the member's conduct improper and inconsistent with the dignity of the occasion. The Committee formulated certain guidelines for the conduct of members and maintenance of order, dignity and decorum on the occasion of the President's Address. Over the years, on the basis of well-established parliamentary practices, certain rules of conduct, norms of behaviour and conventions have developed for legislators in their functioning in the House, in Parliamentary Committees, during President's Address, their functioning outside the House, etc.

The imperative for maintaining discipline and decorum in the Parliament can hardly be over-emphasized. Incidents of pandemonium and unruly scenes have been a matter of concern to all those connected with the working of parliamentary institutions — be it the Presiding Officers, the Leader of the House, the Leader of Opposition, Leaders of Political Parties, Ministers of Parliamentary Affairs, Whips or Members. In 1992, a two-day All-India Conference of Presiding Officers, Leaders of Parties, Ministers of Parliamentary Affairs, Whips, Parliamentarians, Legislators and Senior Officers of Parliament and State Legislatures was held in New Delhi to dwell on many related aspects of the functioning of parliamentary institutions such as disorders and disturbances during the President's and Governor's Address, suspension of Question Hour, the so-called 'Zero-Hour', number of sittings, training of legislators, code of conduct for members, etc. The basic and unequivocal concern of the participants was effective use of the time of the House, orderly conduct of the business of the House and ways and means to make the Executive more responsive to the grievances of the people. The Conference unanimously adopted a Resolution reflecting the consensus. The Resolution *inter alia* stressed that with a view to preserving the democratic and secular fabric and strengthening the parliamentary institutions, it was necessary for the members to maintain decorum and dignity at the time of the President's/ Governor's Address; to utilise fully and effectively the Question time as a well-established device to ensure accountability of the Executive; and to observe the Rules of Procedure in order to maintain order and decorum in the House. The Resolution also emphasised that the political parties should evolve a code of conduct for their legislators and ensure its observance by them.

The Special Session of Parliament to mark the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, held from 26 August to 1 September 1997, unanimously adopted a Resolution which *inter alia* emphasizes:

That the prestige of the Parliament be preserved and enhanced, also by conscious and dignified conformity to the entire regime of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Houses and Directions of the Presiding Officers relating to orderly conduct of business, more especially by

- maintaining the inviolability of the Question Hour,
- refraining from transgressing into the official areas of the House, or from any shouting of slogans, and
- invariably desisting from any efforts at interruptions or interferences with the Address of the President of the Republic.

Maintenance of discipline and decorum, therefore, is a pre-requisite for the smooth functioning of our parliamentary democracy. It is in this context that the concept of ethics and standards for parliamentarians assumes relevance and significance. In March 1997, the Rajya Sabha constituted an Ethics Committee to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the members and to examine the cases referred to it. During the life of the Eleventh Lok Sabha, a Study Group of the Committee of Privileges undertook a study of parliamentary privileges, ethics and related matters. The Report of the Study Group on *Ethics, Standards in Public Life, Privileges, Facilities to Members and Other Related Matters* as adopted by the Committee of Privileges and presented to the Twelfth Lok Sabha recommended broad parameters to be incorporated in the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha for dealing with complaints relating to the unbecoming conduct of a member or his unethical behaviour. As an elected representative of the people, a member's status is an exalted one. While privileges are given to members to enable them to perform their parliamentary duties unfettered, these privileges also entail certain obligations. A dignified conduct is one of the primary obligations of a member of Parliament.

As briefly mentioned earlier, ever since Independence, the overall political scenario of the country has undergone a major change. Consequently, the party system and the nature of Government have also changed. We have been witnessing for the last few years a gradual decline of the dominance of a single political party and the emergence of regional parties on the horizon of Indian politics. Today, we have various political parties advocating the interests of different sections of our society. The last four General Elections returned Parliaments with no party on its own managing a working majority. As a result, we have seen several Coalition Governments.

What is the role of the Speaker in such a political scenario? Basically, his role and functions remain the same whether it is a Parliament with no party in absolute majority or a Parliament where a single party has absolute majority. The Speaker's role is to conduct the business of the House according to the Rules of Procedure. His principal role remains unchanged, *i.e.* to regulate the proceedings of the House and to enable it to deliberate on and decide the various matters coming up before it. Nonetheless, the Speaker operates in a different environment, especially when there is a hung Parliament or when a Coalition Government is in office. The situation becomes more tenuous when the ruling coalition is supported by parties from outside without actually joining the coalition. Differing perceptions of political parties always find their echo in the Parliament, making the task of the Presiding Officer very demanding.

In this age of hung Parliaments, management of the time of the House is very crucial and is of utmost importance. With razor-thin majorities and ever-changing political formulations, orderly conduct of the business of the House in these trying situations is a tough task, especially when the whole nation is watching the unfolding drama.

There is little doubt, therefore, that the time has come when all the political parties should find ways to improve the quality of members' participation in parliamentary proceedings and to ensure that members conduct themselves in a dignified and decorous manner. As elsewhere, training is necessary for them to understand the subtleties and nuances of parliamentary democracy. There is an urgent need for imparting political education to new members, either by the political parties themselves or through some other mechanism as may be evolved on the basis of consensus. As far as procedural training is concerned, the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training (BPST) of the Lok Sabha Secretariat organises Orientation Programmes in Parliamentary Practice and Procedure for new members.

In a parliamentary system of government, parliamentarians play a vital role. The image of democracy as a form of government depends upon the Parliament and the image of Parliament, in turn, depends upon the image of its parliamentarians. In fact, the future of the democratic set up itself depends upon the way the parliamentarians discharge their duties and responsibilities. Once elected, they are representatives not only of their constituency but of

the State and the Nation as a whole. Hence, their behaviour and actions inside the House as well as outside have a great bearing and impact on the national situation. The members of the Twelfth Lok Sabha have the solemn responsibility to launch our country into the next millennium. They have to realise the ideals and goals enshrined in the Golden Jubilee Resolution and to collectively endeavour to set new standards and reach higher levels of parliamentary conduct. It is said that any institution is as good as its members choose to make it. It is thus that the members have to live up to the people's expectations in heralding a new era in our parliamentary polity.

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARIAN*

I am very pleased to meet you all at this inaugural of the Orientation Programme for the newly-elected members of the Twelfth Lok Sabha. The General Election to the present Lok Sabha has taken place during the Golden Jubilee Year of our Independence. Particularly in view of this, you should consider your election a matter of great privilege and honour. Considerable responsibilities also go with this privilege and honour. The discharge of these responsibilities calls for equipment in terms of knowledge of our Parliament, its Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business, apart from the provisions of our Constitution. This Orientation Programme is meant to provide this equipment.

I am aware that some of you have the experience of having been the members of State Legislatures. But, as you may know, there is a difference between Parliament and State Legislatures. While there is a fair degree of similarity in terms of practice and procedure, it must be borne in mind that the concerns of Parliament are much wider in sweep and scope than that of the State Legislatures. The issues debated in Parliament have a profound significance internally as well as externally because the House reflects the collective will and wisdom of the nation as a whole. In this context, a member of Parliament has four aspects of representation to keep in mind. One, he represents the constituency which elects him; two, he represents the political party on whose symbol, manifesto and machinery he fights the election; three, he represents the nation in a very broad sense; and finally he represents and projects himself as an individual.

His concerns must, therefore, reflect these four aspects which may at times come in conflict with one another. Those who resolve these conflicts harmoniously are the ones who rise to become eminent parliamentarians. This is not accomplished in a day but in a long drawn process which calls for the will and desire to excel. Eminence is not inherited but is achieved through

*At the inauguration of the Orientation Programme for new members of the Twelfth Lok Sabha, organised by BPST, New Delhi (9 July 1998).

endeavour and industry, through commitment and integrity. From the eminence and excellence of members, the House benefits, Parliament as an institution is enriched and the nation's march to progress becomes much easier.

To play a meaningful role as members, we must understand the place of Parliament in our polity. Parliament is not a talking shop. It is visualized by the Constitution as an important instrument of socio-economic change. As such, it has to closely watch the functioning of the Government and influence its performance for social good.

How do the members articulate their views? In our Parliament, there are a number of procedural devices available for members to raise matters of concern and they should make full use of them. While doing so, they should bear in mind that Parliament is not the forum to raise issues that are basically the concerns of State Government for which the Legislative Assemblies are the proper platform. The issues proposed to be raised in Parliament should have a wider significance to the society and the nation at large.

The Question Hour has a sanctity of its own as a primary device to call upon the Government to explain its actions and stand on a wide variety of subjects. This is a time when the Government is put to a thorough scrutiny by Parliament and a number of important pronouncements are made by Ministers. Members should, therefore, resist the temptation to demand the suspension of the Question Hour to discuss matters of political interest.

To facilitate adequate preparation by members on subjects likely to come up for discussion, the business of the House is circulated to the members well in advance. In this context, the members should fully utilise the support services provided by the Lok Sabha Secretariat. Among the various support services available to the members to help them in their parliamentary work are the Parliamentary Notice Office, Table Office, Legislative Branch, Interpreters' Branch and the Reporters Branch. We have also an excellent Library which is a store house of information on almost all subjects. The Library is backed by efficient Research and Reference Services and Computer Centre. Honourable members should find some time to take advantage of this facility. Once they start using these services, they can themselves feel the difference as far as the effectiveness of their participation in the House is concerned.

Acquiring knowledge and information has, as we all know, its own significance in enriching one's horizon of thought. But to make use of the information to further an objective is yet another thing. My sincere advice to

members is that they must watch keenly the way our veteran parliamentarians articulate themselves in the House and put forth their views in an organised manner. Members can learn a lot by trying to emulate the example set by our seasoned parliamentarians.

This is the age of specialization. There is so much explosion in knowledge in various fields that it is often difficult to keep track of developments in all the spheres. While a certain level of general awareness is welcome, an in-depth understanding of one or two subjects is desirable, and even essential.

This would enable members to play an effective role in the functioning of the Departmentally-Related Standing Committees which are constituted to make parliamentary scrutiny of the Government more meaningful. So, I would suggest that all of you should develop some expertise on the subjects of your aptitude to perform effectively in the Committees.

Parliamentary proceedings are watched keenly by the whole nation. Therefore, members have to be careful of the way they conduct themselves in the House. The proceedings sometimes get vociferous and noisy, leading to pandemonium and turmoil. This projects Parliament in a poor light, especially in view of the fact that the proceedings are shown live on T.V. Members should refrain from the tendency to rush to the well of the House, raise slogans and create unruly scenes. A lot of precious time of the House is wasted this way, leaving behind a good deal of business unattended. This must come to an end if the credibility of the institution of Parliament is to be sustained.

It is also important that members must imbibe etiquette of Parliament. In the heat of the moment when passions run high, members sometimes tend to use unacceptable language. There is, of course, a practice to expunge objectionable remarks from the records. But with the live telecasting such expunction becomes infructuous as the people would have already heard it. There are also occasions when foreign dignitaries come to visit our national Parliament and address members in the Central Hall. During such times particularly, as also during the Address by the President, members must maintain decorum and order. Not that we can be agitated and volatile at other times! Members are honourable and must behave as such.

It is very important that you attend the sittings and take part in the proceedings. While the Question Hour and the Zero Hour have a packed House, the post-lunch House thins sometimes to the point when even the quorum becomes a problem. In democracies, the legislator is a vital link between the Government and society. He has to present the views of the

people to the Government and convey the message of the Government to the people. The legislator is especially suited as the medium of communication in political education as he can speak in the idiom of the people and relate himself to them rather easily. It is, therefore, the duty of parliamentarians to make the views of the people heard, their expectations fulfilled, grievances redressed, aspirations appreciated and urges understood by the Government. For this, the floor of the House is the best forum and so members should attend the House diligently.

It is the responsibility of every member to raise the level of debate. This calls for thorough preparation on the given subject, patience to wait for one's turn and respecting the time limit. A good parliamentarian, to be a communicator, should be brief in his presentation. Brevity is the soul of not just wit but wisdom too. One can speak at length without saying much and one can say a lot even within a short time. The manner of presentation of views is as important as the views themselves.

The speeches delivered in Parliament should have content, relevance to the subject under discussion and not just political rhetoric. Members can be very effective speakers without necessarily being orators. The temptation to read out written speeches may be avoided as it lacks spontaneity. Speeches should have contextual relevance to the situation as it develops on the floor of the House as distinct from a written speech prepared at home in advance. This alone will enrich parliamentary proceedings, with wit and spontaneity.

The composition of the Twelfth Lok Sabha is very complicated with about 40 political parties being represented in the House. It also has many eminent political personalities among whom are three former Prime Ministers, three former Speakers of Lok Sabha, eighteen former Chief Ministers, and many former Governors, and Ministers. All of us should put such a fund of experience to the betterment of the lot of our people very effectively. For this purpose, cooperation from all sections of the House is indispensable. It is my earnest plea to all of you that you should abide by the Chair and show due regard to the time and views of others.

The new members have been in the House for some weeks now. Some of them might have even begun to feel that the Chair gives more opportunities and time to the senior members to participate in the debates. I can assure the honourable members that there is no intention to discriminate between the new and old members. However, given the rich experience of the senior members, the Chair may, at times, allow them to speak so as to enrich the

debate. It is always the endeavour of the Chair to see that all sections of the House, including the backbenchers, are given adequate opportunities to participate in the debates.

I am happy that the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training has been organising this kind of Orientation Programmes for the benefit of the newly-elected members of Lok Sabha from time to time. The activities of the Bureau have increased phenomenally in recent times for the benefit of parliamentarians and parliamentary officials and its reputation has spread far and wide. Speakers, Presiding Officers and Clerks of various Parliaments are showing keen interest in our parliamentary institutions. Requests have been pouring in at the Bureau to organise Study Tours and Attachment Programmes for Speakers and Clerks of foreign Parliaments. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) also looks upon the BPST as an effective institution to give orientation and training to functionaries of Parliaments of other Commonwealth countries.

Finally, I would like you to strive hard to become good parliamentarians and I wish you all the very best in your parliamentary career. I am sure you will find this Orientation Programme meaningful and interactive. Depending upon your response, we may organise similar programmes on various topics of parliamentary and procedural importance not only in Delhi but also at other places, so that we may devote our time and attention exclusively to sessions, away from the hurly-burly of parliamentary routine. Although officers of the Lok Sabha Secretariat are always available to help honourable members in the discharge of their parliamentary duties, we can also think of organising exclusive "Procedural Orientation Meetings" in which senior officers of the Secretariat may clarify doubts of honourable members with regard to the finer points in procedural matters. I understand that such type of Procedural Orientation Meetings were organised by the Bureau in the past. With these words, I have great pleasure to inaugurate this Orientation Programme.

Thank you.

PARLIAMENTARIANS — THE NEED FOR ORIENTATION*

I am indeed very happy to inaugurate this Orientation Programme for the newly-elected members of Lok Sabha and members of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly. I heartily welcome you to the city of Hyderabad. We had a long stretch of Orientation Programme in July which most of the members attended and this is actually a continuation of the same programme. But this is also different in the sense that it is intensive in nature and held outside Delhi with a view to capturing the full-time attention of the participants.

Parliament occupies a pivotal position in our polity. It is the highest forum of public debate and policy-making and it is indeed a great honour to be a member of Parliament, especially in a developing society like ours wherein Parliament has to function as an agent of social change along with the Executive, Judiciary, the Media, etc. It is a task which involves a great deal of hard work and, therefore, it is essential for us to have a proper orientation of our role and responsibility as representatives of the people.

As the elected popular representative, it is the sacred duty of every member to reflect people's problems effectively in parliamentary debates and, based on that, get the Government's policies and programmes to address them. This is a challenging task to perform, for which we have a number of parliamentary devices available. The use of these devices calls for thorough knowledge of their operation.

Who can deny the fact that the crying need of the people today is development, particularly in the spheres of basic health, education, skill development and employment? But, how much of our public debate is

*Inaugural Address at the Orientation Programme for new members of Lok Sabha and members of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Hyderabad (29 October 1998).

development-oriented? The short answer is, hardly any! There is a strong popular impression that our public debate is dominated by politics rather than even the basic minimum needs of the people. And we must admit that Parliament also reflects this tendency to a considerable extent.

Surely, this must change and it is we who have to bring about that change by reorienting ourselves. We must change public debate from a politics-dominated exercise to a development-oriented endeavour. This endeavour should aim at securing ever-increasing accountability of the Executive, that is, the government. Accountability will get seriously eroded if Parliament's time is wasted without the business being conducted in an orderly manner. I am glad that genuine development-oriented public life has been given a big thrust in Andhra Pradesh under the dynamic and innovative leadership of the Chief Minister Shri Chandrababu Naidu who has brought the concept of development to the centre-stage of public agenda. He has conceived of, and been implementing many innovative schemes like *Janmabhoomi* and reforms in vital sectors which give a spirit of involvement to the people and a sense of direction to governance, keeping the civil service result-oriented. The Andhra experiment has attracted national and international attention. Ambassadors of other countries and other foreign dignitaries in high positions of power who meet me almost invariably appreciate and indicate their keen interest in the transformation taking place in Andhra Pradesh. The nation must take a cue from this Andhra experiment. The need of the day is unity, dedication and commitment amongst the parliamentarians to ensure justice—social, economic and political—as envisaged in the Preamble of our Constitution.

The initiation of the reform process in the face of globalization has focused attention on economic aspects in recent times. But globalization would have no meaning unless life in the villages is improved in the process. Mahatma Gandhi said that the heartbeat of India lies in its villages. Ours is an agrarian society and naturally a large percentage of our population lives in the villages; almost 40 per cent of our people live below the poverty line. In our context, real economic progress lies in rural development. That is why special emphasis is laid on this subject in the agenda of the Orientation Programme. And what is a better place to study rural development than the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD)? Eminent speakers will address you on various subjects in the next two days. I hope you will find the lectures useful and your stay in Hyderabad enjoyable. This is a city having hundreds of years of eventful history which can be seen in the various monuments.

I thank the Ministry of Rural Development and NIRD for hosting this Programme. My special thanks to Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu garu, Speaker, Andhra Pradesh, Legislative Assembly, Ramakrishnudu garu and other dignitaries. I also take this opportunity to commend officers of the Lok Sabha Secretariat who have made this Orientation Programme possible.

Thank you.

INSIGHTS INTO PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES*

We have been organizing Orientation Programmes outside New Delhi so that the honourable members could concentrate on training, away from their normal distractions and programmes. The cool and academic environment of the National Institute of Rural Development, I feel, has been really conducive to our purpose. My compliments are due, first, to Shri R.C. Choudhury, Director-General of NIRD and then to officers of the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

I also wish to place on record my deep appreciation of the contribution made by the faculty members to this Orientation Programme. The presentation by Shri Shiv Shankar and Shri Banatwala on legislative processes reflected their professional knowledge and long experience in the subject. Their presentation of constitutional scheme in regard to the legislative competence of the Centre and the States; of the format of Bills; of different kinds of Bills; of the modalities of introduction, consideration and passage, etc., should help the honourable members perform their role as legislators more effectively.

Shri Banatwala made a special reference to the decline in time consumed in legislative work over the years in the Lok Sabha. Members should also note the qualitative change in the nature of legislative work. These days, because of economic reforms, we are deregulating. We are dismantling various kinds of protection. Legislating for deregulation is more difficult. It has to be done keeping the human dimension in view. Shri Ram Kapse's practical suggestions on the use of various parliamentary devices, particularly the Question Hour, were very interesting and thoughtful. Dr. Singhvi was illuminating, as always. It is up to us to follow up the thoughts that he has provoked and ensure that bureaucracy does not thrive under the cloak of ministerial responsibility; that legislative bodies do not become areas of vacuum, effectively yielding legislative work to the judiciary.

*Valedictory Address at the Orientation Programme for new members of Lok Sabha and members of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Hyderabad (30 October 1998).

Shri Yerrannaidu and Shri Upendra brought their varied experiences and subject knowledge on rural development and Committee Systems respectively, to add a special dimension to this Orientation Programme. I am sure that the honourable members also got to understand the budgetary process in simple terms. Let us compliment all the faculty members.

As honourable Chief Minister, Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu pointed out yesterday, the natural and human resources of our country are rich. They should be put to use gainfully for the socio-economic development of our people. It is for the political decision-makers ultimately to give the necessary managerial directions for the purpose. The inevitable way is to sub-ordinate political interests to national interests.

Action for this purpose is primarily on the floor of the legislative bodies. It is true that time is a constraint in the Houses. But, if the business of legislative bodies takes place according to the schedule, there is enough time for contributions to be made by all. I know that the honourable members can help in this. I have seen their performance when they go on Delegations abroad. Within five to ten minutes, they make very effective presentations with impact even on very complicated subjects.

All the honourable members who have undergone this orientation are grass-root people. Using their skills for an effective reflection of their capabilities in Parliament and the State Legislative bodies, I am sure, will contribute to the improvement of good governance in the country in a big way.

I hope that this Orientation Programme has given meaningful insights to the participants for becoming effective parliamentarians and legislators.

Let me now conclude by thanking Shri Ramakrishnudu garu, Shri Farook garu, each one of the honourable members and all the officials of the Lok Sabha Secretariat, the Andhra Pradesh Assembly Secretariat and the NIRD. My special thanks are due to the Governor Shri Rangarajan for gracing this valediction.

Jai Hind.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A NEW LEGISLATOR*

I deem it a privilege and an honour to be associated with your Seminar. The subject on which we are going to deliberate upon today is something that concerns each one of us. There will not be two opinions among us that when we got elected to the Assembly or for that matter to the Parliament for the first time, our reactions would have involved a mixture of excitement and anxiety—excitement arising out of the privilege of having been chosen to represent a large segment of the people in the Legislature and outside and anxiety about the enormity of the task ahead of us about the responsibility bestowed on us.

Having been elected a representative carries along with it challenges and opportunities at the same time—it undoubtedly involves trials and tribulations. Fundamentally, the challenge before a representative is to meet the hopes and aspirations of the people of the constituency he represents. This in itself provides an opportunity to serve the people and the society at large making an imprint of his own personality in the areas of work. The trials and tribulations of a member essentially centre around the nature of demands on his special role and the odds he has to encounter in the process of attending to them. In a highly competitive political environment, like the one we have in our country today, it requires extraordinary skills to become a successful legislator.

As elected representatives of the people, we are entrusted with onerous responsibilities. A member of the Legislature is expected to fulfil a wide variety of needs and perform several functions both inside and outside the House. In the constituency role, he functions as a safety valve, allowing citizens to express themselves in a way that might not otherwise be possible. He is always looked upon as an advisor, guide and leader in the constituency—he has to function as an active, and at times, passive advocate for local and provincial causes. In a different role, a member is a benefactor serving as the

*At the Seminar on 'Trials and Tribulations of a New Legislator' organised by the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Hyderabad (23 April 1998).

provider of some benefit or the other to the needy. He is also a powerful and influential friend to his constituents. Over and above all these, he is representative of the party under whose symbol he got elected. This fact, perhaps, is the most crucial aspect that influences the behaviour of an elected representative, more so of a new member.

Inside the Legislature, the primary role of a legislator, as the term implies, is to participate in the work of the Legislature. An effective legislator must make full use of all the available opportunities and participate actively in the legislative, financial and other business of the House, bringing to bear his special knowledge, experience and insight into the shaping of public policy and contributing his share in the scrutiny of the performance of the Government and in the redressal of public grievances. From time to time, new laws have to be enacted and old ones amended according to the needs of society. Law-making should not be treated as a routine kind of work. Bills should be properly scrutinized and studied in-depth by the legislators, so that they are free from constitutional and legal lacunae and are capable of fulfilling the objectives for which they are intended. Despite the dominance of the Executive in the domain of legislation, the fact cannot be ignored that as representatives of the people, it is expected of the legislators to make an impact on the contents and contours of proposed legislation and make it socially relevant.

Thus it is a challenging task to be a legislator and it is a still bigger challenge to become a good legislator. But how does one become a good legislator? To my mind, first and foremost, what is of importance is to have a realistic role-perception. A legislator is a representative and leader of the people at one and the same time. As a representative, he must reflect the hopes, aspirations, dreams and the frustrations of the people. It is the bounden duty of every legislator to make the views of the people heard, their expectations fulfilled, grievances redressed, aspirations appreciated, and urges understood by the Government. This is all the more pertinent in a developing society like ours where the institutions of governance have a multiplicity of roles to play. How successful we are as parliamentarians would depend ultimately on how well we are able to categorize our priorities and then discharge the functions to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Friends, there are certain personal attributes which are required of a member to make an impact in the Legislature. Members should endeavour to widen their horizons and enhance their knowledge. Every effort should be made to utilise the available opportunities in the House and make the best

use of the rules. They should consciously cultivate the habit of hard work. They should always display a tremendous amount of grace even when under pressure or provocation.

What the members, particularly new entrants to the Assembly, have to keep in mind is that regular attendance in the House by itself is of great advantage. They can, by observing senior members, learn the intricacies of legislative functioning in the course of time and will be able to develop the art of making a distinction between what is important and what is not. This would help them in raising issues in the House in a proper manner.

I would like to advise my friends here that you should make a distinction between a speech on the floor of the House and a political speech on a public platform. Veteran parliamentarians would testify that the key to success in a parliamentary speech lies in distinguishing what is relevant from what is not. Members should try to develop the habit of coming well-prepared to the House with relevant and up-to-date information. As far as possible, they should endeavour to acquire some expertise in select areas which could stand them in good stead in the years ahead.

In the true democratic spirit, members should be good listeners too. If you do not listen to differing views and perceptions on issues, your democratic credentials will be tarnished. Do not ever forget that democracy is a system of alternatives—alternative parties, alternative policies, alternative principles, alternative approaches and alternative leaders. In a democracy, today's Opposition party could be tomorrow's ruling party and *vice versa*. This fact enjoins upon us that we have to display a very high degree of tolerance of other people's, and parties' views and principles. Tolerance is the basic tenet of democracy.

It is also of utmost importance for a member to have a thorough understanding of the rules of procedure, conventions, customs, privileges of the House, collectively and of the members individually, the Directions from the Chair and above all the fundamental law of the land—our Constitution—which is the real foundation of our democracy. The legislators coming to the Chamber of the Assembly should value this truth.

Sometimes you may find that those in government are not showing the desired responsiveness to public grievances. Sometimes, you may feel frustrated about the lack of opportunities for participating effectively in the proceedings. Do not get disappointed. Time management is the collective responsibility of the Chair, party leaders and the individual members. Keep your eyes and ears open—the rules provide ample opportunities to participate in the proceedings. Every effort should be made to maintain a good rapport with the Ministers and the Press. Ministers can help you in redressing the grievances of your constituents. The Press could fetch you coverage for the

good work you do. Private members' legislation is another area where you can contribute substantially. Members should also take keen interest in the Committee work which provides for meaningful participation in parliamentary business. Matters of detail which are not necessary to be discussed on the floor of the House, but are otherwise important to be scrutinised by the House should be left to the consideration of the Legislature Committees, so that the limited time available with the House is spent on discussing vital policy matters which should find expression on the floor of the House.

Above all, I would appeal to you, not because I am the Speaker of Lok Sabha, but because of the nature of responsibilities entrusted to the Presiding Officer, to lend an ear to him even while trying to catch his eye. The Speaker is also a human being; he is also like one of you, whom you have elected to run the House. Unless members respect the authority of the Chair, the Presiding Officer cannot conduct the proceedings in an orderly manner. Therefore, members should always try to honour the rulings of the Chair.

As I mentioned earlier, under an organised party system, the scope for independent action by a member elected as he is on a party ticket, is very limited. Usually, before one is elected a member of Legislature, one has to have oneself selected by the party one belongs to, to stand for election. This association with the party before and during the election also greatly restrains the extent of independent action by a member of the Legislature. The dependence for election funds is yet another determinant. In an increasingly unstable political environment, this kind of dependence is unavoidable. One of the important tasks for a newly elected member, therefore, is to strike the right kind of balance between being a 'party man' and a representative of the constituency at large. The ultimate success of a member would depend on how efficiently he manages his relationship with the party, with the Press and with the people at large.

Sir Winston Churchill was once asked what he valued most in his life. In his inimitable style, Churchill said: "Two simple letters which come as a suffix to my name Winston Churchill, M.P.". That is the privilege and the honour we all have opted to share. Trials and tribulations of varying nature are inherent in all responsibilities that involve public service. So long as we are able to view them as means to the larger end that we all are committed to, every such trial and tribulation could well be turned into opportunities for good work.

With these words, I am happy to declare this Seminar open.

Thank you.

PARLIAMENTARIANS OF INDIAN ORIGIN*

It is indeed a matter of pleasure and an honour for me to have this opportunity of meeting fellow parliamentarians from various parts of the world. At the very outset, let me also join our Hon'ble Prime Minister in welcoming you to this country where you enjoy a very special status as a matter of right. I hope you all are feeling at home in this land which nurtured you or your forefathers not so long ago. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Indian Council for International Cooperation for taking the initiative to organise an important conference like this. In fact, the objectives and programmes of the Council do help in supplementing the efforts of our Government in building bridges between peoples of the world.

When I came to know that there are nearly 300 representatives of Indian origin in Parliaments the world over, I am inclined to think that the bridges are already there. What is required is strengthening the foundations of these bridges. And for accomplishing this task, I believe, you all are in very advantageous positions. Your identity as members of Parliament in your respective societies goes to prove that in being representatives of the people, what matters is not your religious, linguistic and racial backgrounds, but your ability to represent effectively the problems, aspirations and grievances of the people you represent.

It is indeed a matter of pride for the people in public life like me to note that people of Indian origin are playing a very active and, in some cases, a very decisive role in the socio-political life of the countries which they chose to adopt as their homes. Given our own democratic traditions, it is only natural that our people carry with them wherever they go, the spirit of democracy. As many of you may be aware, India has a very long tradition of democratic practices and experiments. The significant and meaningful terms like *Ganatantra*, *Gananayak* and *Ganapati* can be traced to our most ancient

*At the First International Conference of Parliamentarians of Indian Origin, New Delhi (28 November 1998).

literature. Village democracies—*Gram Sabhas*—had evolved as a common heritage across the length and breadth of our country, long before the advent of democracy in most parts of the world. Over the centuries we, in India, have been equipped to work a parliamentary democratic system. And, with its roots strongly entrenched in the past, by the time India achieved political independence, democratic institutions had already become so much an integral part of our socio-political life.

Besides our own democratic traditions, several other factors played a very crucial and meaningful role in establishing a modern democratic polity in the country in the post-Independence period. One significant factor was the role played by visionary Indian leaders settled in other parts of the world. Endowed with a very broad world-view and inspired by the principles of democracy, many of them waged their own battles in defence of our freedom, from within the countries where they were settled, during the course of our Freedom Movement. The name of Dadabhai Nauroji is what comes to my mind first. After having been elected to the British Parliament on his own merit, Nauroji used his membership most effectively to impress upon the British people and Parliament the need to leave India alone to decide its destiny.

In later years, V.K. Krishna Menon also launched a relentless campaign in the United Kingdom for India's freedom. The British leadership could not counter Menon's argument that 'socialism in Britain cannot be built on the basis of imperialism abroad'. Elsewhere too, Indians abroad organised themselves and staged a ceaseless campaign for the freedom of the Motherland. Similarly, democratic spirited citizens of other nations also contributed enormously towards the cause of Indian freedom in certain crucial phases of the movement. All along, our leaders of the post-Independence years also cherished and encouraged a very broad vision of the world.

If today we believe that democracy has come to stay in India, if we find that representative institutions have become so integral a part of our polity and the idea of democracy so integral a part of the thinking of our people, part of the credit for this will definitely go to all these personalities.

The contributions of Indian leaders towards decolonisation in Asia and Africa have also been quite significant, both during the course of our own Freedom Movement and in the post-Independence years. It is an acknowledged fact that India's attainment of freedom set in motion the process of the demolition of colonialism in Asia and Africa.

Friends, what do we have to learn from these facts of history? It is a matter of pleasure and satisfaction for democratic-minded people everywhere that the Indian people carried with them, wherever they went, the spirit of democracy. They have contributed in their own ways towards the sustenance and nurturing of democratic institutions in the lands they chose to be their homes. Your presence here today is proof enough for this.

Now, having earned this privilege of being the representatives of people in your respective societies, you all are in a special and privileged position to give something back to this country. The least you can do is to project this land positively to the world you belong to—not focusing only on its problems and weaknesses, but its achievements and points of strength as well. For us here, you all are the unofficial ambassadors of this ancient civilization. Our goals of one world, of equality of human beings, of world peace, of friendship and cooperation between nations and peoples and of prosperity of human kind as a whole could be realized only through the collective endeavours by us all. You can also make valuable contributions in getting for India its due place in the comity of nations.

Friends, I hope, conferences like this would help in providing the right kind of motivation in discharging this added responsibility on you. I also hope this Conference, the first of its kind, would be a highly rewarding experience for all of us.

Thank you.

PARLIAMENT, THE EXECUTIVE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE*

I am happy to be amidst you and I have pleasure in welcoming you all to the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training for this Appreciation Course. I congratulate all of you for having made it to the civil service. Since much of the public activity in our country originates from the Government, the civil servants have a special position in our polity and in governance. Along with the special position goes the special responsibility of the civil service. Therefore, the civil servants should acquire an adequate understanding of what it means to be in the service of a developing society like ours and what relations the Executive ought to have with the elected representatives of the people.

This programme is geared to give you a good insight into various dimensions of the relationship between the civil servants and the legislators in our parliamentary democracy. I am sure that all of you are familiar with the way our Constitution operates. Our Constitution has envisaged an organic relationship of mutual harmony among the three pillars of Government, that is Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary. It is for the Legislature to legislate. The Executive implements policies and programmes while the Judiciary acts as the watch dog of the Constitution and the rule of law. Our system broadly conforms to the Westminster model of governance. The Government is made responsible collectively to the Legislature for all its actions and remains in office only so long as it enjoys the confidence of the Legislature. The Legislature has a number of procedural devices to ensure the Executive's accountability to the elected representatives of the people. It is the basic thrust of parliamentary democracy, be it in Britain or in India. However, we have not adopted the British model blindly. We have evolved the system to suit the needs of our developing society. In the process, we

*At the inauguration of the Thirtieth Appreciation Course in Parliamentary Processes and Procedures for the Probationers of the Indian Administrative Service at BPST, New Delhi (22 February 1999).

have developed many innovative devices which have enriched parliamentary practice. These devices are meant to help us in achieving the objective of providing good governance.

The civil servants, according to our system of government, are expected to be neutral. In fact, participating in politics or bringing political predilections in to the official decision-making would attract disciplinary rules against the civil servants. Of late, one of the serious concerns expressed by the people is about the nexus between the politician and the civil servant. This concern arises on account of an apprehension that politically motivated conduct of the civil servants would result in the denial of equality before law and equal protection of law for all citizens which is the essence of the rule of law. In their official business, civil servants would have direct interaction with legislators who are political leaders. They should resist the temptation of building an undesirable nexus with political leaders. Indeed, as many of you would realise in the course of your service, in the long run it is only the politically neutral, honest officers who would be respected even by those in positions of political power. However, neutrality does not mean that they should develop any hostile attitude towards legislators or political leaders. The Executive arm of governance consists of Ministers as well as civil servants; together they constitute what is generally understood as administration. Ministers are political executives while civil servants are permanent executives. They need to work in close co-operation. Rules and regulations are meant for uniformity of decision-making in comparable cases. But the civil servants need to ensure that governance does not become a matter of mechanical application of rules and regulations.

The civil service does wield considerable authority in the matter of policy initiatives and in interpreting them to influence decision-making. This authority of interpretation should be exercised positively to secure public good. With the advantage of continuity in office, knowledge of precedents and insight into implications of applying the given set of rules and regulations, the civil service has the wherewithal to suggest their modification in a rational way to suit the overall socio-economic needs of the people. Rules and regulations are not for ever. Indeed, even our Constitution has been envisaged as a flexible instrument and we have had 78 amendments since its adoption.

A lot of work in the government is of routine nature. Civil servants get bogged down with a load of routine files and paper work. In the process,

often, there is even a tendency amongst civil servants to think that parliamentary work is a distraction from their work. This tendency should not be allowed to grow. Indeed, briefing and preparing Ministers to answer questions and transact other business in the Legislature helps the civil servants, preoccupied with routine, to review and analyse the performance of their Departments and get deep insights into the problems of implementation which they may not otherwise get.

Sometimes, a tendency is also noticed of Ministers evading replies to questions in the Legislature. This adversely impacts on the authority of the House. This is also a poor reflection on the performance of civil servants. Civil servants are a link in the chain of accountability of the Council of Ministers to the Legislature, of individual Ministers to the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, of civil servants to Ministers and of legislators to the people. If the link of civil servants in this chain snaps or even gets weakened, the concept of accountability would suffer and our parliamentary system may decline ultimately. The civil servants would do well to familiarise themselves with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Houses, so that they gain a good grounding on the expectations of the Legislature from the Executive.

The Committees of Legislatures are as important as the Legislatures themselves. Indeed, substantial work, whether it be for making laws, or scrutiny of budgets or the performance of Departments, gets transacted in the Committees. It is generally the officers that appear before the Committees and not Ministers. This arrangement has been made out of design. Civil servants, being the permanent executive, are expected to have the expertise to provide the required inputs for Committee work. Meaningful interaction between the civil servants and Parliamentary Committees helps in improving the overall quality of administration.

I need not overemphasise the need for dignified personal conduct on the part of the civil servants in their interaction with legislators. A disturbing aspect in this context is that very frequently these days, I keep receiving complaints from members of Parliament about rude behaviour of civil servants, particularly those working in the field. Requests are made to take action against such officers for breach of privilege on account of their misconduct. The conduct of officers in the given circumstances may or may not attract constitutional provisions relating to breach of privilege. But the frequency of complaints of misconduct by officers is not a good augury.

I hope the civil servants themselves proactively, and civil service training institutions, would evince special interest in orienting the bureaucracy on dignified and restrained conduct particularly in their interface with those in public life.

I wish all of you success in your careers. Let your success also reflect on the ultimate improvement of the conditions of living of our people.

Thank you.

PARLIAMENT AND THE BUREAUCRACY—VITAL RELATIONS*

I am happy to inaugurate this Appreciation Course in parliamentary practices and procedures for the Senior Audit and Accounts Officers of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and Probationers of the Indian Postal Service.

Parliament occupies a pivotal place in our political system. The polity revolves around the institution of Parliament. It is the Parliament which is responsible to the nation for good governance. In the Westminster model, which we have adopted with suitable modifications, the Executive emanates from Parliament, is accountable to Parliament and remains in office during the pleasure of Parliament. Parliament has every authority to question everything the Government does and the latter is constitutionally bound to explain its every act, decision and stand to the former.

As elected representatives of the people, it is the sacred duty of every member to make the views of the people heard, their expectations fulfilled, grievances removed, aspirations appreciated, urges understood and even the fears shared by the government of the day. This is specially relevant in a developing society like ours in which the institutions of governance have to function as instruments of socio-economic change. This is a difficult task to perform, for which members have been provided with a variety of devices in our parliamentary practice and procedure.

For a parliamentarian, practice and procedure is the same as a surgical handbook is for a doctor. The Rules of Procedure provide the guidelines for conducting the business of the House, for regulating the conduct of the members and for making the Executive accountable to Parliament. These rules were made keeping in mind a variety of situations that may arise and provide the instructions to meet such situations. The various methods that

*At the inauguration of Appreciation Course for Senior Audit and Accounts Officers of the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General of India and Probationers of the Indian Postal Service, BPST, New Delhi (20 July 1998).

members have are given in detail as also the procedures to make use of them. These methods are Questions, Motions, Resolutions, etc. which help Parliament to keep the Government on its toes.

Parliamentary practice and procedure is not fixed in nature but keeps growing, incorporating the innovations made from time to time. There is an impression in certain quarters that we have copied the British procedure. Nothing is farther from truth. Our procedure is what we have developed to cater to the varied needs of a modern Parliament in all its activities.

We have reached a stage of parliamentary maturity to quickly develop innovations. For example, the confidence motion is one such innovation in recent times. Our Rules of Procedure do not speak about confidence motions. There is a provision for moving no-confidence motions. But in view of the changing pattern of our election results, we have found this innovation which is a typical Indian contribution to the discipline of parliamentary political science.

Modern Parliaments are over-burdened with work. There is a great increase in the area of State activity with the arrival of the Welfare State. The work of Parliament has also increased because of this. In order to meet this, Parliaments the world over have developed a well laid-out Committee System. We also have an elaborate Committee System in our Parliament. We not only have a well-knit system of Standing Committees, Departmentally-Related Standing Committees, but we also appoint *ad hoc* Committees. From among the Committees of Parliament, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) must be of special significance to officers of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

This Committee examines whether funds are spent for the purpose for which they are granted. In this, the Comptroller and Auditor General functions as the friend, philosopher and guide of the PAC. The CAG plays a vital role in ensuring the financial accountability of the Executive to Parliament by examining the spending pattern of Government funds. The exhaustive reports of the CAG serve as authentic sources of information on which the PAC relies. Thus the Audit and Accounts Officers have a special relationship with our Parliament.

The Postal Service plays a great role in linking the nation by bringing far off people together through the post card. It is also playing an important role in the area of small savings, etc., in rural areas where there are no banking facilities.

The purpose of this Appreciation Course is to provide you with some insights about the relationship between Parliament and the Executive in our system. The relationship is organic whereby both the organs are expected to function in harmony with mutual understanding. Our goal is good governance. The Executive governs while Parliament oversees the processes of governance to ensure good governance. This is especially relevant in a developing society like ours. This is an interactive process and on many occasions you may have to interact with members. Therefore, you must have a broad understanding of the members' obligations to the public and their place in our polity.

The BPST has been successfully organising these programmes for some years. The feed-back from those who attended is positive about its usefulness. This programme offers you an opportunity to interact with parliamentarians informally and see from close quarters the functioning of our parliamentary processes. I hope you will enjoy attending this course and find it useful and instructive. I wish you all the very best in your careers.

Thank you.

CONSTITUTION IN REGIONAL LANGUAGES*

I am indeed happy that the Constitution of India has now been translated into Sindhi which is an important language of India. The supreme law of the land must be made understandable to the common man in order to invoke his interest in the affairs of the State and his participation in those affairs.

The Constitution is the fundamental law of the land which links the citizens with the State in an organic relationship. This is all the more so in a developing country like ours. Here, the Constitution and the institutions it has created have to function as instruments of social change. The goal is to usher in a brave new world in which every citizen can live a life of liberty, equality, justice and dignity. That is why, it is essential that the people should know what their Constitution contains and what it aspires to achieve.

In a federal society like ours wherein we have a rich variety of vernacular languages, it is desirable that the Constitution is translated into all these languages. There are any number of people who are literate in their mother tongue but cannot understand English, or Hindi for that matter. For such people, translated versions of the statute book go a long way in creating an awareness on and inculcating an interest in our political processes.

Our Constitution is a charter of our ambitions and aspirations, containing articles of faith about the democratic task of governing ourselves. It is a work that must be read by every citizen to adequately understand its structures and processes. That is why, there is a fit case to include a study of the Constitution in our school curriculum and collegiate syllabus. This is an ideal way to inculcate understanding about and instil respect for the Constitution among our younger generations. In this process, translations of the Constitution are especially helpful. And it is heartening to know that our Constitution has been translated into most of the Indian languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule.

*At the function to release the Sindhi version of the Constitution of India, New Delhi (27 July 1998).

The Sindhi version is an important achievement in the process of further integrating the Sindhi language into the national mainstream of Indian languages. The Sindhis have made a huge success of themselves in various walks of life, thereby enriching our national life. The role played by Acharya Kripalani, Jairamdas Daulatram Alimchandani, Dr. Choithram Gidwani, A.T. Gidwani, Ghanshyamdas Shivdasani, N.R. Malkani, Vishindas Bharwani and others in the freedom struggle and the making of modern India is adorable.

The story of Sindhis in India is a saga of struggle. They came here empty handed following the partition when the Sindh province was lost to Pakistan. It was rather unprecedented in history when an entire community—the Hindu population of Sindh—migrated, leaving behind their homes, hearth and every other thing they had. With their industry and intelligence, grit and determination, the Sindhis have strived hard for success and achieved it eventually. In the process, they have become an important community in our society.

While the Sindhis have diligently preserved their culture, their language and literature require greater attention of the Government. The States in which Sindhis are domiciled must show a special sensitivity towards the Sindhi language and literature. Every State in India has a vernacular language but Sindhi has no home State to rely on for the development of the language. That is why it requires greater care and support from the Union Government. The unity of India has always been expressed best by its rich diversity. The Sindhi factor in our diversity must be well-protected. The publication of the Sindhi version of our Constitution is an important step in that direction and the Law Ministry deserves our kudos.

I congratulate the Indian Institute of Sindhology and its Director Dr. Satish Rohra on successfully completing this project.

Thank you.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE JUDICIARY*

I have great pleasure in associating myself with the Seminar on "Human Rights and the Role of Judiciary" organised by the Rajahmundry Bar Association to mark its Centenary Celebrations.

As you are aware, the founding fathers of our Republic, visionaries as they were, designed the Constitution as an instrument—effective and workable—demarcating clearly every sphere of governmental activity for achieving the cherished goals and fulfilling the aspirations of the people of India. Although our Constitution does not recognise the doctrine of separation of powers in absolute rigidity as in the United States, it lays down clear-cut areas of operation of the Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary. It defines their powers, delimits their jurisdictions, demarcates their responsibilities and also regulates their relationship with one another and the people. The Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary are the three vital pillars on which our democratic structure has stood majestically for the last fifty years and except for occasional friction here and there, these organs have been dutifully recognising and respecting their constitutional limits.

The concept of Human Rights is one of the most widely talked about themes in the recent times. However, the two words mean different things to different people across the globe, and for those who enjoy they are a basic need, and for those who have been denied, it means a whole world of freedom. The concept of Human Rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is not new to us. Many a millennium ago, it was said in the Rigveda that "No one is superior or inferior. All human beings are equal. They are all brothers who should strive collectively for the common welfare." This is our proud heritage. Today, the world is just beginning to realize the truth and significance of what our sages and scriptures had said many centuries ago. Therefore, it was in keeping with our rich traditions that human

*At the Seminar on 'Human Rights and the Role of Judiciary' organised as part of the Centenary Celebrations of the Rajahmundry Bar Association at Rajahmundry, East Godavari Dist., Andhra Pradesh (3 April 1999).

rights were incorporated into our Constitution in the form of Fundamental Rights.

Respect for Human Rights has always been one of the main concerns of our democracy. We strongly believe that unless we respect the fundamental rights of our people, we cannot give effect to democracy. With its ethnic, religious, linguistic and economic diversity, the task of the promotion and protection of human rights in our country is indeed as gigantic as it is complex. To a large extent, the institutional framework for the observance, promotion and protection of human rights derives its strength from the Constitution. Besides the fundamental rights granted to every citizen, there are institutional safeguards, including legal remedies for seeking redressal, if these rights are violated. The provision to move the Supreme Court directly is itself a fundamental right and there have been many occasions when the courts have *suo motu* taken up the cause of protection of Human Rights especially relating to child labour, bonded labour, environment, etc.

To further safeguard human rights of the vulnerable sections, various Commissions and Committees have been set up under the Acts of Parliament. Apart from the National Commission for Human Rights, we have the National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Minorities, the National Commission for Backward Classes and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These Commissions have been playing a crucial role in safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of society. Statutory recognition has also been given to human rights in other laws like the Indian Evidence Act, the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, etc.

For its part, our Parliament has always acted as a vehicle of social change. Over the years, it has enacted a large number of social legislations to safeguard the interests of the deprived, the downtrodden and the weaker sections of society. The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955; the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; the Child Labour (Protection and Regulation) Act, 1986; and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 are some of the important enactments in this realm. Driven by a strong belief in international cooperation in the context of Human Rights protection, India became a party to six core Conventions on Human Rights.

Friends, a mere assertion of the principles of Human Rights in the Constitution and various laws will not ensure their promotion and protection. The fundamental problem is not how to justify them but how to protect them. We have to take many positive steps to make the rhetoric of Human Rights into an attainable reality. This calls for a massive campaign to create

Human Rights awareness and for this the cooperation and involvement of various sections of society—political parties, judges, lawyers, public servants, media persons and others is required.

In today's changing world, education is the key to promote awareness about the concept of Human Rights among children and the general public. As you all are aware, the decade 1995-2004 has been declared as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. Unless and until Human Rights are included in the curricula and syllabi of schools, colleges and universities as a subject of study, their mere reiteration will have no importance. People should be taught, how, in their day-to-day life, observance of Human Rights would enhance the quality of life.

The media is another powerful instrument which can play a role for the advancement of Human Rights. So far, the media has more or less limited its role to merely reporting cases of Human Rights violations as and when they come to its notice. The media must necessarily endeavour to educate and enlighten the masses about their rights. No other mode of communication can carry the message of Human Rights to every nook and corner of the country better than the media—whether it is print or electronic. The media can give a positive orientation and direction to Human Rights movement by spreading a message that promotes tolerance by fostering peace and understanding among our people.

There is an urgent need to understand the significance of Human Rights as well as duties in order to ensure the prevalence of freedom, justice, peace and order. It is also becoming increasingly evident that Human Rights observance is a *sine qua non* of economic development, as well as an integral part of good governance and democratic living. Therefore, it should be the common endeavour of the Executive, Legislature, the Judiciary, and the media to ensure that fundamental freedoms are nurtured, preserved and protected.

Thank you.

BENCH AND BAR—TWO PILLARS OF JUSTICE*

It is indeed a matter of pleasure and an honour for me to associate myself with the Centenary Celebrations of this prestigious Bar Association. Centenary celebration is a great occasion for any association or institution and the individuals associated with it. Therefore, at the outset, I would like to convey my hearty felicitations to all those who have been associated with the Rajahmundry Bar Association all these years one way or the other, on this memorable occasion. This Association has grown over the years both in size and stature and today it is one of the leading Bar Associations in the State. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those associated with this function for thinking it appropriate to felicitate me.

I am happy to note that this Bar has produced several eminent persons who have distinguished themselves in the legal profession and the socio-political life of the country. The Bar Associations are important instruments for the mobilisation of people in defence of our fundamental freedoms, and for bringing about positive changes in our society. The legal fraternity made invaluable contributions to our historic struggle for freedom as can be seen from the fact that the single largest segment of leaders of our freedom movement came from the legal profession. It will not be an exaggeration to say that if there is a profession to which the nation should be grateful for giving it a great line-up of leaders during the most crucial phase of its modern history, it is the profession of lawyers. Gandhiji himself, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajaji and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, to mention only a few names, were all from the legal field.

In a free society, it is the leaders who initiate laws and establish legal system for the common good. In subjugated societies laws are often repressive and it requires the efforts of leaders among lawyers to question and demolish them. This was one of the principal tasks of the leaders of our freedom movement also. It was the lawyer in Gandhiji who recognised the inherent

*At the Valedictory Function of the Centenary Celebrations of the Rajahmundry Bar Association (4 April 1999).

injustice and the repressive nature of the legal system in South Africa which impelled him into action to rebel against them. It was again that realization which brought him into the centre-stage of our national movement which eventually led us to liberation and to a dignified life. This intrinsic spirit of the legal profession has been carried forward all through the post-Independence period by eminent men and women of the country. In the first three Lok Sabhas, an average of 30 per cent members came from the legal profession. It is only in recent years that their proportion has come down, more because of the increasing interest shown by people from other professions and socio-economic backgrounds than because of any apathy of the legal profession towards politics.

In the modern society which has replaced individual ruler's whims and fancies by established rules and legal codes, when conflicts of interests reach the point of chaos, it is the law and the judicial system, including the Bar, that step in to restore order and sobriety. Therefore, to facilitate an efficient and effective functioning of the judicial system, a strong and independent Bar is indispensable. The Bench and the Bar are the two pillars on which the system of justice stands. It is only through the collective endeavours of a learned Bar and an unbiased Judiciary that we can ensure the dispensation of true justice. It is imperative for the healthy and orderly survival of a society that the aggrieved have confidence that the doors of justice are always open for them and that justice will be available at an affordable cost.

Friends, every member of the legal fraternity is aware of the old saying that 'justice delayed is justice denied'. In our country, this delayed justice is assuming alarming proportions today. But what is each one of us doing to rectify the situation? Delayed justice is not the result of our judicial system as such. I am constrained to say that some of the learned members of the Bar also contribute in their own ways to the process of delay. One important reason is that many of them take up more cases than what they can handle within a reasonable time-frame. In such a situation delay is inevitable. If the Bar also discharges its functions with a greater sense of responsibility to the society at large, and to the individual litigants in particular, justice could be dispensed faster and at a price affordable to all.

A good Bar should be known for its learning. With the fast increasing quantum and quality of legislation, thorough learning and specialisation in specific areas are all the more important. It is only through such specialisation that we can produce true experts and thereby help enrich each area of the

vast discipline of law. In this age of communication revolution and information explosion, the legal fraternity must make use of new avenues that are opening up by way of computerisation networking with major Bars for easy reference, research and the like.

Learned friends, as you all would agree, the establishment of an orderly society is the ultimate objective of law and the judicial system of which the Bar is an essential part. Laws do not exist in a vacuum. The social setting of law is very crucial to understand its intricacies. Lawyers have to be sensitive to that setting and only with sensitivity to that can one become an effective lawyer. The relationship between a lawyer and a litigant is similar to that between a doctor and a patient. The client reposes his full faith in the lawyer. It is very important for the ethics of the profession that the lawyer reciprocates that faith fully.

Daniel Webster, one of the greatest legal minds of modern times, cautioned against the deteriorating trends of the profession when he said:

Our profession is good if practised in the spirit of it; it is damnable fraud and iniquity when its true spirit is supplied by a spirit of mischief-making and money-getting. The love of fame is extinguished; every ardent wish for knowledge repressed; conscience put in jeopardy and the best feelings of the heart indurated by the mean, money-catching, abominable practices, which cover with disgrace some of the modern practitioners of law.

I am sure, my learned friends here are well aware of the sanctity of the profession and its ethics. That is why this Bar has had a hundred years of glorious existence. I wish the Bar and all those associated with it a very bright future.

Thank you.

JUSTICE DELAYED IS JUSTICE DENIED*

It gives me pleasure to be here in this historic town of Narsapur and I am indeed very happy to learn that the Hon'ble Sub Court here has completed 75 years of useful existence in administering justice to the public. I congratulate the Bar Association for taking the initiative to celebrate the historic occasion of this Platinum Jubilee.

The Sub Court of Narsapur is perhaps one of the oldest institutions of Judiciary in the coastal belt of Andhra Pradesh. That is not the only reason for Narsapur's fame as a flourishing town on the west banks of the mighty Godavari. *Barrister Parvatheesam*, a legendary character in Telugu literature, was born here! The place owes a lot to Shri Mokkalapati Narasimha Shastry garu for making it popular and I pay my humble tributes to him and to his literary creation — *Parvatheesam* on this occasion.

Coming back to the subject of law, as practising advocates, you are all too well aware of the place of law and lawyers in a developing society like ours. Lawyers have a proud legacy of being in the forefront of our historic non-violent struggle for freedom from alien rule. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Ambedkar who were some of the leading lights among the freedom fighters were all from the legal profession. They were roused by the exploitative nature of the colonial rule. Many of them had given up the highly lucrative legal profession and plunged into the vortex of the freedom struggle in response to the call of conscience. The sensitivity of a lawyer to social problems arises from his closeness to people. Unlike there in other professions, the lawyer is closely involved in the social processes.

In all developing societies, the law is seen as an instrument of social change. Ours is a traditional society steeped in superstition and ignorance on the one hand and iniquity and hierarchy on the other. The law seeks to

*At the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the Bar Association, Narsapur, West Godavari Dist., Andhra Pradesh (12 July 1998).

change this social reality through the judicial process by the proper carriage of justice. But the lawyer goes a step further in encouraging people's involvement in social movements. This explains the lawyer's proclivity to political work in comparison to other professions. This is a welcome thing. We need to broaden people's understanding and enhance their awareness about the various problems that confront society in a number of spheres. If the people are involved, the need for government's intervention can be reduced.

We, as a nation, are in the habit of looking for legal prescriptions for complex social problems. So, we have a plethora of laws in every walk of life. But law has its limitations as an agent of change in a society that is largely unlettered. Until and unless the need for change is internalised by people, law by itself cannot be of much use. It would simply lead to more laws, more violations and more litigation thereby over-burdening the courts. This is the bane of our legal system. The quantum of litigation pending in our Courts is amazing. Let us look at the statistics. In our High Court, two-year old cases are 71,190; five-year old cases add up to 47,169; ten-year old cases 16,953; while those above ten years are 309. The total pending cases in the Andhra Pradesh High Court are a whopping 1,35,621. In the apex court there are 16,586 regular matters and 6,660 admission matters pending as on 31 December 1996.

Today, the number must have only increased. This is a bleak scenario, to say the least. Every case that comes to the High Court would have a history of 5 to 10 years in the lower courts. The legal fraternity must introspect on the sorry state of affairs and help towards reducing the delay. As lawyers, we know all too well that justice delayed is not only justice denied but also justice destroyed. And there is a persistent impression in society that lawyers are also responsible for the delay in the dispensation of justice in our courts. This is not an altogether baseless impression and as spirited citizens we must ponder over what we can do to improve the situation and ensure proper carriage of justice.

To begin with, every lawyer must think like a Judge and play a constructive role in solving petty disputes. Many a case can be settled in the lawyers' chamber if we can advise parties about the desirability of a negotiated settlement in matters pertaining to marriage, property, etc. This calls for large heartedness on the part of lawyers, as it benefits society vastly. And the fewer cases that come up in the courts can be taken up seriously and sincerely. This way, the image of the lawyer is enhanced, the credibility of the courts is reinforced and the interests of society are advanced. After all, social interest must be the primary factor of our perspective as pleaders.

Also, we must rise above the narrowness of our personal considerations and cultivate a vision that is broader in perspective. I say this in the context of lawyers going on strikes all too often as a reaction to any innovative measure the government seeks to introduce to streamline the judicial process. The legal profession must be receptive to changes that would do good to the system and to the public rather than take a petty personal view of change. I am saying this in the context of the stand taken by lawyers in the District Courts to a move to raise the financial jurisdiction of the Sub Courts. This is a move that would vastly benefit the public as the Sub Court is nearer to one's native place. Moreover, the burden of District Courts can also be reduced substantially.

In the Platinum Jubilee year of this historic Sub Court in Narsapur, the legal community must take a pledge to do its bit in the administration of justice on time. Our legal system is so warped that winning a case is proving to be a pyrrhic victory. In the Golden Jubilee year of India's Independence and the Platinum Jubilee of the Narsapur Sub Court, all of us who belong to the legal fraternity must draw inspiration from the ideals that fired the imagination of the pre-Independence generations of advocates and rededicate ourselves to the cause of the country.

When we do that, we bring prestige to our calling, honour to our Courts and glory to our country. I wish the Bar Association of Narsapur all the very best in all its endeavours to strive for excellence in the service of society.

Thank you.

LOK ADALAT—A MEANS OF SPEEDY JUSTICE*

It is indeed a matter of great privilege for me to be associated with the organising of a 'Lok Adalat' at Tuni in East Godavari District. I also take this opportunity to thank Shri Yanamala Ramakrishnu, Hon'ble Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly for having extended a personal invitation to me to attend this function.

In any democratic set-up, it is of utmost importance that all sections of society get economic and social justice, besides being assured of equality of status and opportunities. It was in recognition of this important principle that the founding fathers of our Republic, in their sagacity, had made justice—social, economic and political, as the first and foremost guiding principle of our Constitution. The ideal of justice as enshrined in the Preamble of our Constitution is predominantly a product of the social content of our Independence Movement. I may add that this in turn stemmed from an awareness of the plight of the masses during the long spell of alien rule.

It is aptly said that nothing rankles more in the human heart than a brooding sense of injustice. The difficulties faced by the poor in their pursuit of justice are compounded by their illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. Therefore, it is for the State to focus its attention on legal aid, legal literacy and legal awareness programmes with multi-dimensional strategies to infuse confidence and courage in the masses to wage a legal battle against every injustice and oppression. Further, as held by our apex court, the right to legal aid and the right to speedy trial have always been integral parts of the right to life guaranteed under article 21 of our Constitution. Therefore, it has been enjoined upon the State to ensure that expedient and efficacious justice is rendered to all citizens so that the constitutional goal of equal justice and free legal aid is realised.

Friends, the Government of India has been taking steps from time to time for providing legal aid to the poor. Article 39A of the Constitution of

*At the Lok Adalat at Tuni, East Godavari Dist., Andhra Pradesh (19 December 1998).

India enjoins upon the Government to provide legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of society to ensure equal justice for all—the cardinal principle on which the administration of justice is based.

Our judicial system in all its components—civil, criminal or otherwise—has a duty to provide for speedy, efficient and fair trial of cases. However, sometimes, access to justice becomes so expensive that the poor and the downtrodden have to face immense hardships in protecting and defending their rights. Under the banner of legal aid, various measures have been initiated to render expeditious and inexpensive justice. The system of the *Lok Adalat* is one such device. Though this system has been in vogue since ancient times under different names and forms, the *Lok Adalat* in its modern usage has come into prominence only during the last decade and a half through statutory measures—primarily the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. It has aptly been said that the instrument of *Lok Adalat* is participatory justice because justice is imparted by the people themselves in an informal setting through negotiation and conciliation and not by the Judges in the formal courts of law.

Over the years, the institution of *Lok Adalat* assumed much prominence as the courts are overwhelmingly burdened with a large number of cases. The piling up of cases in the courts cannot be attributed to a single factor but to a variety of factors, some of which are complex. An increased tendency to litigation and the resultant pendency, granting of liberal adjournments, long arguments and lawyers' strikes are but some of the factors which vitiate the normal functioning of the courts. As a Presiding Officer of the Lok Sabha, the apex law-making body in the country, I am aware of how concerned our members of Parliament are over the ever increasing number of pending cases and the corresponding delay in the dispensation of justice.

The high incidence of case pendency in our courts is really alarming. In the Supreme Court itself, over 19,000 cases, both civil and criminal, are pending and in the High Courts the number is around 32 lakhs. And as for the situation in the subordinate judiciary—courts across the country—it has touched the two crore mark. Besides these, the courts are also required to cope with Public Interest Litigation. The growing number of cases, in a way, is a reflection of the people's awareness about their rights and their unflinching faith in the Judiciary as the arbiter and the dispenser of justice. The person aggrieved knocks at the doors of the courts, if I may say so, as a last resort obviously and after exhausting all other remedies. But if the dispensation of justice is delayed beyond a reasonable time, as the popular adage goes, then it amounts to the denial of justice itself. A litigant expects fair, speedy and inexpensive justice. It is in this context, I think, that the working of the *Lok Adalats* should be viewed and encouraged.

With the coming into effect of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 from 9 November 1995, a statutory base has been provided to the *Lok Adalats*. All the proceedings before a *Lok Adalat* are now deemed to be judicial proceedings and its award is a decree of a civil court. Now *Lok Adalats* are being organised at different places all over the country. Generally, civil, revenue and criminal disputes which are compoundable with the permission of the court and motor vehicles compensation claims and land acquisition cases are taken up by the *Lok Adalats*. In addition, *Lok Adalats* are also taking up cases involving mutation of lands, land *pattas*, bonded labour, matrimonial and family disputes and bank loan cases.

It is heartening to note that nearly 68 lakh court cases were settled through the *Lok Adalats* upto March this year. Yet another area where litigation is increasing is in service matters. It is in this context, that while inaugurating a Conference on 'dispute resolution' hosted by the International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution, the Chief Justice of India, Justice (Dr.) A.S. Anand has expressed the desire of establishing permanent and continuous *Lok Adalats* in different Government Departments, so that legal issues pertaining to these Departments are settled by way of conciliation.

I am glad to know that our State has been organising *Lok Adalats* and legal literacy camps much before the passage of the Central enactment which came into force in 1995. Andhra Pradesh is also among the first few States which constituted all the bodies required under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. Today, the *Lok Adalat* movement is being viewed with awe and respect as more and more people come to know of it and see its working at close quarters. However, there are still doubts about its efficacy among some, which perhaps could be attributed to a lack of proper awareness.

Therefore, it becomes a bounden duty of the legal fraternity, voluntary agencies, public-spirited citizens and the District and Taluq level officials to create general awareness among illiterate, poor and weaker segments of society and the rural population, of the facilities available to them. May I also suggest to the legal fraternity in particular to take effective steps to sensitize the masses about the scheme and concept of the *Lok Adalats*. I earnestly feel that it is only through such endeavours that we can ensure speedy and inexpensive justice to the common man.

In the end, I congratulate the organisers of this *Lok Adalat* for their effort and wish them every success in their endeavour.

Thank you.

MEDIA—A PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY*

It gives me great pleasure to associate myself with the second National Conference of Regional Newsmedia.

Friends, freedom of the Press has been recognised as among the fundamental freedoms in all democratic countries, either explicitly or as inherent in the freedom of speech and expression. It is an integral part of the inner strength and dynamism of any democratic society. Without a free Press, democracy is untenable and even unthinkable. The right to this freedom has been universally recognised in all Bills of Rights.

When we think of freedom of the Press, we have to take into account all the three essential elements, *viz.* freedom of access to sources of information; freedom of publication; and freedom of circulation. Needless to say in a democratic society, the government which rests on the consent of the people ought to provide for free debate and free exchange of ideas. It is only by means of a free discussion and constructive criticism that the government will remain responsive to the will of the people.

In a country like India, where we have a parliamentary form of government, the media, particularly the Press, can be a standard vehicle for the dissemination of public opinion. It is again the Press which, as a popular medium, conveys to the people the substance of parliamentary legislation and discussion. The media keeps the people informed of what is happening in Parliament. It is through the media that Parliament enjoys so much publicity and, among other sources, it is through the press that Parliament gathers information which helps it keep surveillance, and ensure the accountability of the Executive effectively.

The importance of the freedom of the Press was fully understood and endorsed by the founding fathers of our Constitution. The imperishable values

*At the Second National Conference of Regional Newsmedia, New Delhi (17 December 1998) (*read out in absentia*).

of our freedom struggle have gone into the making of the media in India. Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution declares that all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression which, as is generally understood, covers freedom of the Press.

There is no disputing the significance of the freedom of speech and expression to a proper functioning of a democratic polity. Thus, in India, we have a free Press and as a nation, we are committed to the freedom of individuals and institutions. Therefore, we cannot think of a regimented press. Freedom of speech generally includes the right to criticise the government and to voice dissent. And I am glad that this aspect of the freedom of the Press is fully understood and exercised. But this is not enough. There must be something more positive than mere expression of dissent. Along with this freedom, there must be another stream; the stream of involvement; of sympathetic understanding; of objective knowledge; of sincere and painstaking research and investigation. Freedom is valuable, only if it has objectivity and responsibility and is aimed at creating awareness among the masses about their rights and duties. Without responsibility, freedom degenerates into anarchy. It ultimately leads to disintegration; and this disintegration will affect every organ of the body-politic, including the Press.

Equally pertinent is the need to ensure that the media does not become urban-biased. Rather, it should aim at raising consciousness among the rural masses who make up the bulk of our population. Our fight against poverty, disease and ignorance can be successful only if the regional newsmedia brings about an awareness among the people, particularly the rural people, and opens the path to change. We have a rich and varied linguistic heritage in our country. Some of the largest selling newspapers and magazines are in regional languages. In addition to the print media, in recent times regional language TV channels are catering to the demands of the people from different parts of the country. As such, the regional newsmedia can and should act as a catalyst for the socio-economic transformation of rural masses and give direction to the overall development of the country.

It is a fact that the national Press and the electronic media are centered on developments taking place in urban areas. As a result, the issues, problems and struggles concerning the life of the deprived and the downtrodden located in small rural communities and the regional societies of non-metropolitan India are not getting the attention they deserve. The importance of taking decisive steps towards decentralisation of economic and political power is self-evident. However, steps should also be taken towards decentralisation of media and communication. Media centralisation in the metropolis is harmful as it denies people at the base access to basic economic and political information.

Friends, unless we build up a local and regional media network as a force which complements and supplements the efforts of the national media, we cannot highlight the concerns and problems of smaller communities and regional politics. The creation of an alternative local and regional media system has become all the more necessary in the backdrop of political and social awakening at regional and local levels and among the deprived sections of society. Therefore, the strengthening of the local and regional media system would not only go a long way in broadbasing our politics and economics but would also contribute to cultural rejuvenation of the downtrodden communities. People-oriented and people-centered development presupposes the empowerment of local communities and regional societies. It is here that the regional and local media can play a crucial role.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank Bhupendra Jain ji and others for having invited me to this second National Conference of Regional Newsmedia. I am sure that the journalistic fraternity would carry on the torch of truth and justice and would play an important role in tending to our democratic system and the welfare of the teeming masses.

Thank you.

A FREE PRESS—VITAL FOR DEMOCRACY*

It gives me pleasure to be amidst you at the All India Convention of Editors. I value this occasion as it affords me an opportunity to interact with the media.

Friends, the place of the media in a democracy is all too well known. It is one of the important pillars on which the foundation of democracy is laid. That is why it is called the Fourth Estate and it has a vital responsibility in strengthening the democratic processes. In fact, democracy is measured by the freedom of expression, of which freedom of the Press is a vital element. Conversely, a free Press is beholden to democracy for its existence.

The role and responsibility of the Press in a developing society like ours is rather sensitive because the Press has to act as an instrument of change. It does not merely convey news, important as it is. It purveys views as well. In this context, the small and medium newspapers have an especially relevant role to play, as they reach a wider segment of the social spectrum. The small papers convey news and views to the readers in their own native idiom. That is why, regional newspapers have a great appeal to the readers. Hence, these papers can play a significant role in moulding public opinion on important issues confronting society as these papers are closer to the public.

One of the subjects of utmost concern for our society is the question of development. Associated with this question are issues like population, environment, education, migration, gender equity, etc. which play an important role in achieving development. In these areas, the small newspapers can wield considerable influence on the public mind by discussing the issues in an idiom that people can easily comprehend. Thus, a perspective can be developed on important matters which can inspire people's motivation and involvement in the developmental processes.

*At the inauguration of the All India Convention of Editors, New Delhi (30 July 1998)

In a vast society like ours, development cannot be achieved unless people are involved. Neither can democracy be strengthened. This calls for motivation which can emanate from the media, especially the vernacular media with which the people have an intimate equation. The local Press can reach even remote areas, while the big media has a tendency to cater to the relatively well off urban segments. Mahatma Gandhi once said that the heart beat of India lies in the villages. India lives in its villages. It is, therefore, necessary to influence the rural folks for any sustainable change to come about in the real sense.

There is, thus, a pertinent need to strengthen the medium and small newspapers' segment of our print media. These papers have an advantage over the big ones in that they do not represent industrial houses or big business interests and are, therefore, independent of any external control. The owner and editor is often the same person. He can present events in their true perspective. He can also take up issues based on their inherent merit. Besides, local issues get adequate focus in the pages of a small paper. The readers feel nearer to events and the editor has the freedom to take up socially relevant issues and present them as he thinks fit. He is not obliged by any outside interests and for him, journalistic ethics is the guiding principle.

While the small papers play an important role in the dissemination of news and views, they have a great deal of difficulty in news-gathering. They are not in a position to employ correspondents and photographers on a large scale. Sometimes, they may not be in a position to pay for the services of the news agencies. The Government must look into this difficulty and help them out. The papers, for their part, can also overcome this difficulty if they cooperate among themselves by exchanging news footage. This can cut costs to a considerable extent.

Your strength lies in your unity. That will make you economically viable, socially constructive and politically educative. I hope this Convention will discuss the issues concerning the media in detail and come to a greater understanding of its role in building a brave new India.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Convention and I wish it all success.

Thank you.



Addressing the media on the assumption of office of the Speaker,
Parliament House



At the Presidential Procession, 25 March 1998



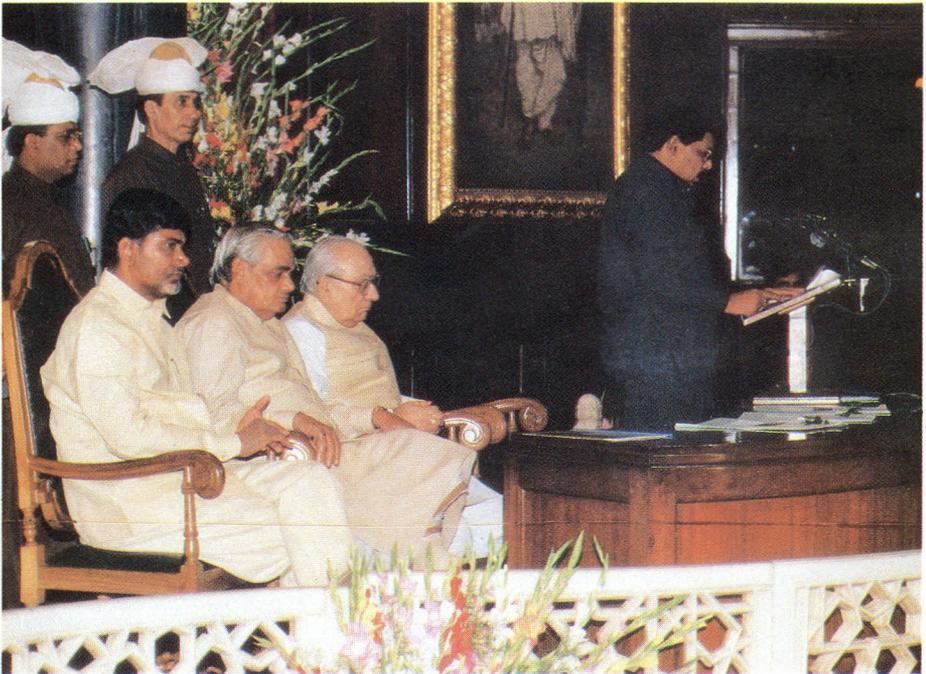
At the Presidential Procession, 22 February 1999



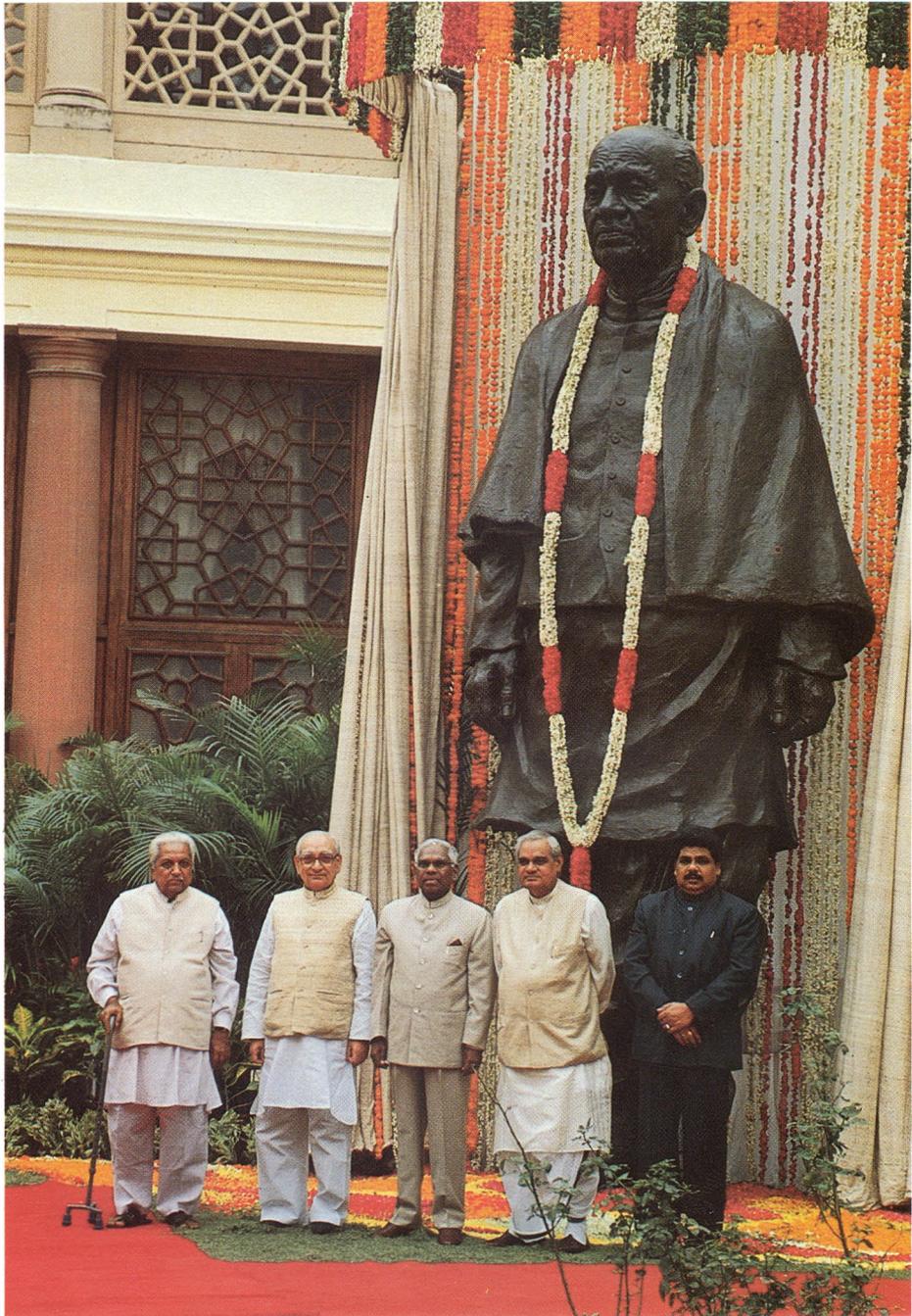
At the closing function of the 50th anniversary celebrations of India's Independence, Central Hall, Parliament House, 15 August 1998



Addressing the distinguished gathering after the unveiling of the statue of
Shri K. Kamaraj, Central Hall, Parliament House, 18 July 1998



Addressing the distinguished gathering after the unveiling of the statue of
Prof. N.G. Ranga, Central Hall, Parliament House, 27 July 1998



At the unveiling of the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Parliament House Complex, 14 August 1998



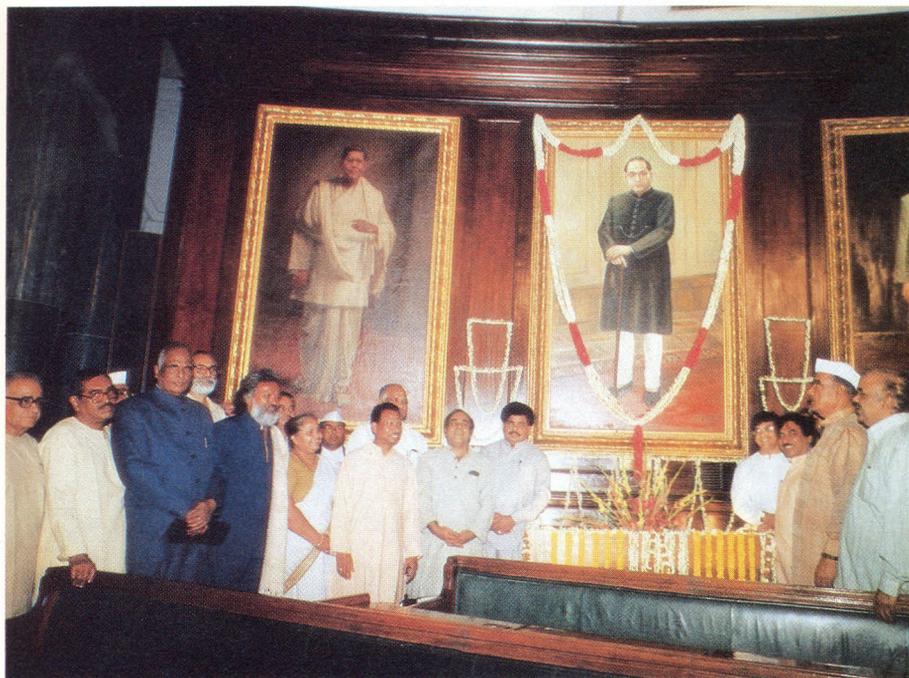
At the unveiling of the statue of Prof. N.G. Ranga in Parliament House Complex, 27 July 1998



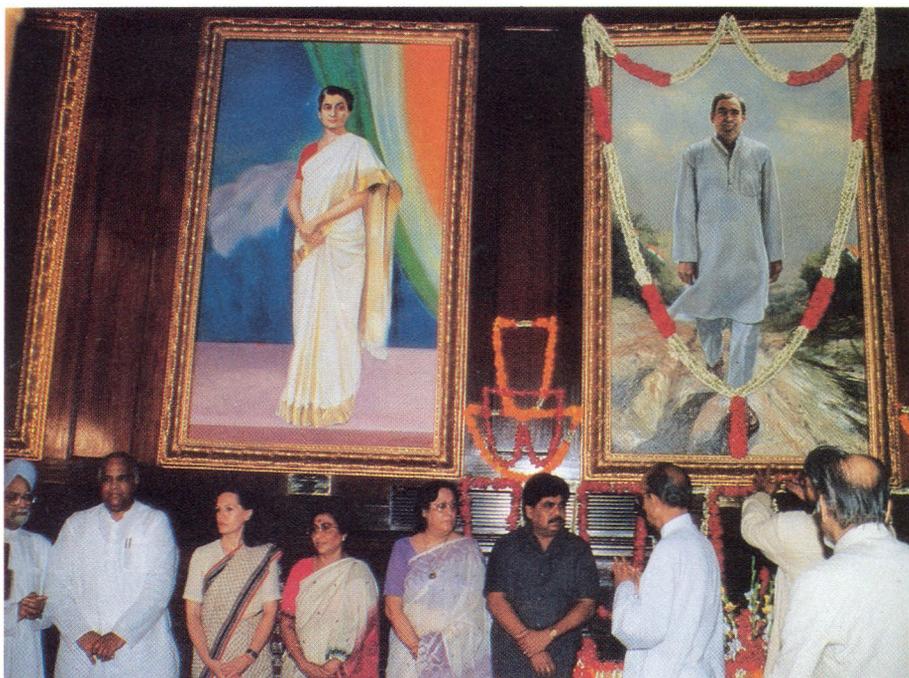
With distinguished dignitaries at the statue of Birsa Munda, Parliament House Complex, 28 August 1998



Paying floral tributes to Smt. Indira Gandhi on her birth anniversary,
Central Hall, Parliament House



After paying floral tributes to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on his birth anniversary,
Central Hall, Parliament House, New Delhi, 14 April 1998



After paying floral tributes to Shri Rajiv Gandhi on his birth anniversary,
Central Hall, Parliament House, New Delhi, 20 August 1998



At an all party meeting, Parliament House, New Delhi



At a luncheon get-together with Leaders of Parties and Groups in Lok Sabha



At the Orientation Programme for new members of the Twelfth Lok Sabha, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi



At the Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, New Delhi



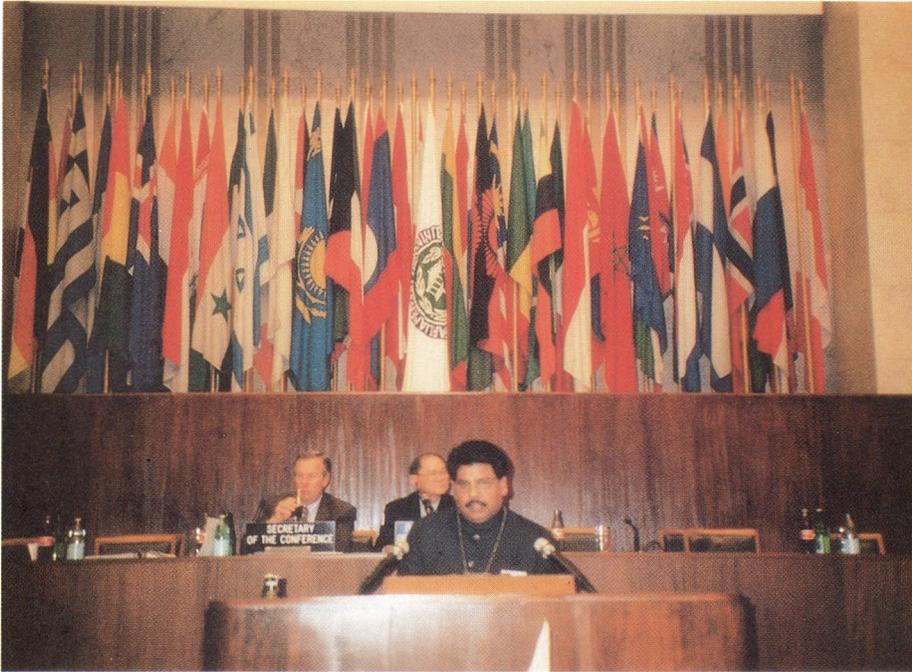
At the Orientation Programme for newly elected members of Parliament and legislators from Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly at Hyderabad



With the Presiding Officers of State Legislatures, New Delhi



At the Second North-East Region Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, Aizawl, Mizoram



Addressing the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Moscow



At the briefing session for the Indian Delegation to the 45th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi



With Members of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly attending an Orientation Programme organised by the BPST, New Delhi, 21 April 1999

II

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

ELECTRONIC MEDIA—CHALLENGES AHEAD*

It gives me pleasure to be amidst you today. I deem it a proud privilege to inaugurate the Doordarshan Studio and High Power Transmission Station at Vijayawada. It has been a long standing demand of the people of coastal Andhra to have a High Power T.V. Transmission Station and Studio in this city. Vijayawada has, for long, been the cultural capital of the coastal Andhra region. The Vijayawada Radio Station, which has completed fifty years of its creative existence, is one of the best A.I.R. Stations in the country. It has served the entire coastal belt with distinction in a variety of spheres like music, drama, films, fine arts, agriculture, industry, education, entertainment, politics, etc. by broadcasting high quality programmes. While it has fully utilised the intelligentsia of the region in its programmes, it has also given birth to many artists who later became nationally renowned in their respective spheres.

The setting up of a Doordarshan Studio and a High Power Transmission Station makes the circle rather complete. Vijayawada is already an important print media centre from where important Telugu newspapers are published. It is also the cultural capital of the Telugus where lived the likes of Pingali Venkaiah, Dr. K.L. Rao, Viswanatha Satyanarayana, Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna, Narala Venkateswara Rao, Ushasri, Gora, *et al* who have enriched our culture with their unique contributions in various spheres. Therefore, the latest facility gives a completeness to the city as a leading centre in the sphere of information dissemination.

Friends, we all know that television has emerged as a powerful medium of mass communication. And Doordarshan has made tremendous progress in expanding its network from a small beginning with just black and white transmission. The 1982 Asiad brought colour television to India and with it the era of tele-serials. What started off in a small way with *Hum Log* has

*At the inauguration of Doordarshan Studio, Vijayawada (16 January 1999).

today become the major trend of television everywhere. And the arrival of Cable T.V. has further revolutionised the potential of the small screen. Now, we have a plethora of private channels to choose from, without even touching the TV sets. This almost made the world to be at our finger tips, as it were! But, the private channels have their own commercial logic. They are too absorbed in commerce to pay much attention to the richness and variety of our cultural heritage. That is why, today, we find a plethora of situational comedies and soap operas mainly addressing the urban and upwardly mobile audience. These channels are in a hurry to cater to popular taste by dishing out film-based programmes and entertainment-oriented serials with frequent commercial intervals. They have no time for rural subjects and rural areas where a vast majority of our people live.

In this context, Doordarshan has an onerous responsibility of paying adequate attention to subjects like culture, agriculture, education, environment, etc. It also has to compete with private channels, lest it should face the risk of losing viewership. This is a difficult job to accomplish, but it must be attempted with all the resources and initiative available to Doordarshan. In this connection, Doordarshan must roll up its sleeves and come up with its best foot forward. It has certain advantages which must be utilised effectively. However, it should not view itself in the mould of private channels as it is State-run and, therefore, has a responsibility to society. It should not cripple creativity and originality in its programmes. And yet it cannot compromise with our ethos and values in the name of popular taste.

I hope the facility at Vijayawada will come in handy for a better presentation of its programmes and to give a wider coverage to the events in the coastal areas in its news bulletins. I wish the Centre all success in producing tasteful, useful, creative and culturally rich programmes by giving ample opportunities to the local talent. On this occasion, we must gratefully acknowledge the role played by Shri Sobhanadreeswara Rao in getting this project sanctioned as a member of Parliament in 1994. I am glad that he is present here today to see his endeavours bear fruition.

Thank you.

CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC LIFE—A MAJOR EVIL*

I deem it a great privilege to participate in the Valedictory Function of the Centenary Celebrations of the Rajahmundry Bar Association. First of all, I thank the organisers for the opportunity afforded to me to share my thoughts with this august gathering. In fact, my old links with the legal profession make me feel at home on occasions such as this. It is a matter of great satisfaction for me to know that for the Seminars organised to mark the centenary of the Association, topics like "Corruption in Public Life" and "Human Rights and the Role of Judiciary", have been selected for discussion. I hope the views expressed here will go a long way in creating greater awareness among the people on the issues involved.

When we look around, we find that the spread of corruption in public life is not only distressing but disturbing also. It is true that widespread corruption may not be a typically Indian phenomenon. It is prevalent in other countries as well. Nor is it new to present day India. But, the unfortunate fact is that in our country it has pervaded rather deep into almost all aspects of our national life, be it political, economic, social and even legal. This sordid practice of corruption in public life can be attributed to general apathy, passivity and indifferent attitude towards the problem. The extent of corruption in public life today is putting a question mark on our very survival as a society of values and also as a democratic polity.

Friends, as I said earlier, corruption is neither peculiar to our society nor is it new. Traces of corruption had been there even in ancient times. The famous treatise of Kautilya on statecraft, *Arthashastra* says that it is difficult for a King's (State's) official to resist the temptation of pocketing the whole money or a part thereof which is entrusted to his custody but is meant for public good. However, such occurrences were rare. In the medieval and the British period also, corruption was there but by and large the society and the

*On "Corruption in Public Life" at the Valedictory Function of the Centenary Celebrations of Rajahmundry Bar Association (4 April 1999).

administration were honest. When India attained Independence, the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, during one of his famous prayer meetings, cautioned the people that corruption in public life had, by then, become much worse than before, as restraint from within had given way to greed. It would be eliminated only when people realise that the nation does not exist for them, but it is they who exist for the nation. The Mahatma's remedy to eradicate this evil was simple: he believed that only eternal vigilance by honest people, a high code of morals and sane influence over corrupt persons could eliminate this evil from our midst.

Corruption is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. It needs intervention on many fronts and the combined efforts of many people to check it by setting a national agenda. This check may operate through reform of the political process or restructuring and reorienting the government machinery or through the empowerment of people or by creating sustained public pressure for a change.

It is, indeed, a matter of great concern that in our society and the national life, corruption is making greater inroads in spite of the awareness among people against it and the government's efforts to eradicate it. In the first year of our Independence itself, the Prevention of Corruption Act was passed which was virtually rewritten in 1987 in the light of our experiences during the following four decades of its working. Then, as an institutional framework, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) were established in the early sixties to combat this menace. In order to go deep into the root causes of the problem and find out ways and means to combat it, the Government of India formed a Committee under the Chairmanship of late K. Santhanam whose report contains far-reaching suggestions and recommendations to overcome this menace. In the late sixties, the Administrative Reforms Commission was set up, on whose suggestion, it was proposed to create the institution of Lokpal to investigate charges of corruption against high public functionaries. In the Bill presently before Parliament to set up this body, it is proposed to include the Prime Minister among the high functionaries of the Government, so that the Lokpal can inquire into the allegations of corruption against him also. At the State level, the institution of Lok Ayukta is working quite satisfactorily.

If the Government is making all out efforts to combat corruption, can Parliament be far behind? Certainly not. Even during the first few years of its existence, Parliament took cognisance of charges of corruption against one

of its members who was ultimately pressurised to quit his seat. In the subsequent years, Parliament played an important role in creating public opinion against corruption by way of discussing the issue through resolutions, motions, etc.

Friends, as in other walks of our national life, corruption has made inroads in to the legal sphere also, particularly in the administration of justice to the common man. Some unscrupulous elements have penetrated this area and as a result, the common man is confronted with judicial wrangles which culminate in prolonged litigation and delayed justice. Here, I feel that members of the Bar, whose primary responsibility towards people is to secure speedy justice and safeguard their rights, can play a pivotal role. Through their support and contacts, they can always inspire people to work towards securing the intended objectives behind the enactment of laws. In the present day society of conflicting individual and group interests, the Judiciary must ensure a humane interpretation of the law. In fact, the bench and the Bar are the two pillars on which stands the edifice of justice. Therefore, the Bar and the bench must create confidence in the people that the doors of justice are always open for them and that justice is easily accessible, besides being less expensive.

To conclude, I would say that the need of the hour is that we all should assume the responsibility to set a worthy example. This requires determination, integrity, conviction and courage. What we need is an intensive introspection. Once it is there, I am sure, corruption would take a waning course. If everyone makes an honest effort, bribery, corruption and injustice could gradually be eliminated from our public life. Indian society has for long cherished the virtues of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. Today, we must imbibe them in our daily lives to overcome corruption and abuse of authority, so that we can look forward to peace, justice and honesty in society.

In the end, I thank the organisers for the excellent manner in which the entire celebrations have been organised and the love and affection showered on me by way of kind words during the felicitations here. I am really overwhelmed. I wish the Rajahmundry Bar Association well in its future endeavours.

Thank you.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN—A CHALLENGE*

This is the Golden Jubilee year of the adoption of the Human Rights Charter which, *inter alia*, calls for non-discrimination against women. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has done well to include political empowerment of women in its agenda during this Conference.

Empowerment of women in politics and decision-making should be understood in its historical perspective. The origins of the feminist movement could be traced to the publication of the book *Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mrs. Mary Wollstonecraft of UK. She had been deeply influenced by the democratic radicalism of Rousseau in her work. It took about the whole of the nineteenth and a substantial part of the current centuries for women to struggle and secure their basic political right of suffrage. This struggle itself is known as First Wave Feminism. As suffrage was secured, the feminist movement seemed somewhat dormant. In the 1960s started the Second Wave Feminism and the universally practised discrimination against women came to be highlighted and the male-dominated power structure was questioned. Since the 1970s, four World Conferences on Women took place under the aegis of the United Nations and the question of all-round empowerment of women received international attention. Today, there is a universal consensus on the need for empowerment of women in politics. But discrimination continues. There has been a call for what has been termed as "Shevolution", for including women's equal partnership with men in politics and decision-making.

The demand for women's equal partnership with men in politics has an obvious reason. Though women are half of the world's population, they are dismally outnumbered in politics. In politics, the case is indeed one of missing women. Of over 40,000 members of Parliament world-wide, women members account for only 12 per cent — that is about 4500. The exceptions are Nordic countries where women parliamentarians account for about 30 to 40 per cent

*At the 44th CPA Conference Panel Discussion on "Empowerment of Women in Political and Decision-Making : Can Sustained Gains be made?" Wellington, New Zealand (20 October 1998).

and New Zealand where they have a strength of 30 per cent. The world average of women Ministers is only about 6 per cent. Even in the United Nations, women Ambassadors are only 3 per cent. These data show that there is discrimination against women in politics, cutting across countries, irrespective of the stage of their development.

There are two schools of thought in respect of the strategies for women's empowerment in politics. There are those who believe that the only way to bring about this empowerment is by constitutional and legal measures by reserving seats for women in the legislative bodies. There are others who are anti-reservationist. They believe that reservation is like a crutch; that it would be artificial; that it may not really attract talents to politics; that induction of women without talents in politics is neither good for themselves nor for governance; and that it may not bring about sustainable political empowerment of women. Often, the Nordic example is pointed out to argue that even without reservation, women can achieve high levels of political participation.

A strategy often suggested is that instead of providing constitutional or legal reservation of seats in legislative bodies, it should be left to political parties to provide for reservations in party hierarchies and electoral contests. While this may be a desirable strategy, it may not necessarily ensure access for women to positions in legislative bodies. Women are also apprehensive that parties may not give them winnable seats in electoral contests, nor provide them with adequate funding for the purpose. One measure for allaying this kind of apprehension would be by making it legally mandatory for all political parties to assign adequate percentage of seats for women in electoral contests.

In India, by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, one-third of seats has been reserved for women in local bodies. Over a million women have come to hold elective offices in these institutions. There is a proposal for a Constitutional Amendment to provide for one-third seat reservation for women in the House of the People and State Legislative Assemblies. So far, this amendment has not been feasible because of sharp differences of opinion among political parties on the modalities of reservation.

While affirmative action for women's political participation is no doubt, desirable, the issue should be seen in the overall perspective of women's empowerment in general. The underlying causes of discrimination against women should be identified and addressed.

Historically speaking, there has been a movement for emancipation of women in India since the nineteenth century. Women participated in our

freedom struggle. India has subscribed to women-related international instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Besides, there are constitutional provisions and legal measures for their protection. Developmental measures have been taken up through the Five-Year Plans for their advancement. Institutional mechanisms like the National Commission for Women have been created for specially addressing women's concerns. But, it is a fact of life that women continue to be discriminated. Discrimination is practised, as anywhere else in the world, at the level of households, in education, at the work place, in society and in governance. In the General Elections of 1998, only 43 seats, that is barely 8 per cent of the total number of seats, in the House of the People went to women.

The root cause for the global practice of discrimination against women is patriarchal attitudes. These attitudes need to be changed. This is a societal problem. The ultimate solution for this and for sustained gains in the empowerment of women in politics and decision-making is education, enlightenment and awareness generation amongst women as well as men.

Thank you.

INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE—A RESULT OF STRUGGLE AND SACRIFICE*

I am glad to be associated with this function organised by the B.R. Ambedkar National Youth Cultural Federation to felicitate our veteran freedom fighters. I sincerely welcome this initiative of honouring our valiant freedom fighters who had fearlessly faced the might of the British empire to bring freedom to the people of India.

This day, the 9th of August, has a special significance in the history of India. This was the day in 1942 when the people of India spontaneously revolted against the British rule. The previous day, on the 8th of August 1942, the All India Congress Committee had passed the famous 'Quit India' Resolution and proposed starting a non-violent mass struggle to achieve complete freedom. On that day, Gandhiji had given his famous *mantra* 'Do or Die'. There was a determination, a vow to free India or die in the process but not accept the perpetuation of slavery.

The participation of our people in large numbers in the freedom struggle was not because they wanted something in return. They were convinced that only freedom could restore their lost human dignity and bring prosperity to India. There was an inner urge to sacrifice everything and even face bullets, to unchain our Motherland from the colonial bondage. Such was the strength of this popular movement that the Britishers resorted to unimaginable repression and torture. History recorded that over 10,000 people perished in police and military firings. India had not witnessed such intense repression since the revolt of 1857. In the end, the Government succeeded in suppressing the movement. But, it failed to crush the spirit of the people. It failed to extinguish the flame of freedom and the great capacity for sacrifice and struggle that the people of India had developed.

*At the function organised by the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar National Youth Cultural Federation to felicitate freedom fighters, Vijayawada (9 August 1998).

Eventually, freedom was achieved after a sustained and prolonged struggle. Today, we are enjoying the fruits of liberty and development because our freedom fighters fought for these things. As we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our Independence, we must pay our humble tribute to the sacrifice made by earlier generations. On this 50th year of India's Independence, I salute all our freedom fighters for their valour, sacrifice and unflinching patriotism. But for the sacrifices and statesmanship of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, India would not have been what it is today. We sincerely and gratefully acknowledge their contributions.

Today, some of us may not be happy with the prevalent socio-political and economic situation in India. There are instances of communalism, casteism, wide-spread corruption and even criminalisation of politics. Indeed, we as a nation are passing through a crisis of confidence. But let me assure you all that we are not drifting. India is trying valiantly to stand firm and erect. We have made significant achievements in many fields and demonstrated our capability in various areas, including space and nuclear sciences. In the next millennium, I am sure, India will emerge as one of the major powers and play a leading role in international affairs. We must use our freedom given to us by the sacrifice of those generations to take India into the 21st century as a strong and prosperous nation. The ideals of our freedom fighters and leaders like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar will continue to guide us in the task of nation-building.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the B.R. Ambedkar National Youth Cultural Federation for giving me an opportunity to be associated with this function. I wish all our freedom fighters a long and healthy life.

Thank you.

NORTH-EAST—PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS*

I am very pleased to be with all of you today in this beautiful part of our country. I also deeply appreciate the impeccable hospitality of the people here. My felicitations to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for its continued initiative and interest in this region to strengthen the forces of democracy.

I find from the agenda of the Conference that two vital subjects are going to be discussed—'Fifty Years of India's Independence and its impact on the North-Eastern Region', and 'Privileges and Immunities of Legislators'.

The overall picture of the economy in the States of the North-Eastern region does present a much lesser status of development than the all India average. High levels of population growth and dependence on agriculture, low levels of industrialisation, low levels of literacy and low per capita income are the characteristic features of the region. Literacy is significantly lower than the national average of 52 per cent in the States of Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya — 41 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively. Population growth rate ranges from 2.6 per cent to nearly 4 per cent in the States of the region as against the national average of 2.1 per cent. The per capita income at current prices ranges from about Rs. 2,900/- to Rs. 6,000/- as against the national figure of over Rs. 9,000/-. Excepting in the cases of Assam and Tripura, industrial development is of a rather low order, dependence on agriculture being nearly 90 per cent. The national average of people living below poverty line is 36 per cent. Only Manipur and Mizoram are the States where the percentage of people living below the poverty line is less than 36 per cent. In the other States of North-Eastern region, people living below the poverty line range from 38 per cent to 41 per cent. This regional disparity in economic and human development is, of course, a matter of very serious concern which the legislators of the region should subject to serious analysis in this Conference.

*At the inauguration of the Second North-East Regional CPA Conference, Aizawl, Mizoram (22 April 1998).

The prerequisite for development is peace in society. It is common knowledge that there are serious social tensions and conflicts in the North-Eastern region. This subject was discussed, I find, in the last CPA Regional Conference at Kohima. So, I shall desist from going into it in elaborate detail. However, I would emphasise that peace cannot be secured merely by military or police action; nor can it be purchased by flushing the region with money. For finding a lasting solution to the problem of social tensions, the underlying causes have to be identified and addressed.

Migration of people of the cross-border and in-country varieties into the region has been one of the sources of social tension. The Home Ministry related Parliamentary Standing Committee, in this context, has recommended in its report in February, 1997 that measures to protect and safeguard the distinct identity and interests of the people of the region should be initiated.

It is also necessary to generate, through the print and electronic media, awareness about the life styles, culture and problems of the people of the North-Eastern region amongst the people of the rest of India. I am making a special mention about this because social and national cohesion is not a one-way process. It can come about only by a meaningful intermingling of the people themselves. There should be organised exchanges between the North-Eastern region and the rest of India—exchange of students, of farmers, of civil servants, of legislators and representatives of non-government institutions.

It would also be worthwhile to conduct a detailed study of the functioning of the special local self-government institutions which have been brought into existence under Part Ten and the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution, particularly to understand how effective they have been in safeguarding the interests of the local people. Modalities of making them more effective and vibrant institutions could also be looked into.

Development of agriculture, industries and infrastructure, creation of employment opportunities and holding out hope for the youth in a credible manner are indispensable to bring about greater social cohesion to enable the people to have a sense of participation in national development. The North-East is a significant part of the federal polity that India is. So, the local identity of the region should be brought to be federation-friendly through the modality of development, through meaningful devolution of powers.

Apart from the substance of development, the process of development itself is important. The people of the region should have a sense of participation in the developmental process itself. This would materialise only if the people

of the region share the fruits of development. Care should be taken to ensure that the people of the region do not feel that their natural resource endowments are only being exploited without themselves being sharers in the benefits of development.

Probity and standards in public life is an issue exercising the minds of legislators all over the world. In our country also, public expectations regarding rectitude of the holders of public office have become quite high, particularly in the context of access to political power having become much more difficult than ever before because of competitive party politics. As all the participants in this Conference may be aware, adjudication of the conduct of prominent political leaders has been taken recourse to through Public Interest Litigation including at the level of the apex court of the country. There have been repeated discussions on the subject in the meetings of the Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies as well. People at large and legislators themselves are not any longer sympathetic to refuge being taken by holders of public office under cover of constitutional provisions relating to privileges and immunities. A group of the Privileges Committee of the Eleventh Lok Sabha has already prepared a report on ethics amongst legislators. This report has also been tabled in Parliament. I am sure that this Conference will go deeply into the limits of immunities and privileges and into the issue of rationalising the regime of our laws so as to ensure probity and standards in public life.

In this context, I am reminded of an important initiative that Shri Ganesh Kutum, Hon'ble Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, had taken for the training of legislators, that is, the initiative for establishing a North-Eastern Institute for Parliamentary Studies and Training, resources being partly raised from the allocations for M.P.s' Local Area Development Scheme. My predecessor, Shri P.A. Sangma had taken up the matter with the Ministry of Programme Implementation. In the meantime, because of the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, the matter could not be pursued. I shall follow up this important proposal as I believe that professional training of legislators is one of the surest ways of upgrading the standards of legislators and quality of parliamentary and legislative business.

From the point of view of overall development of the region as well as maintaining standards in public life, a vital and relevant measure in my opinion would be the involvement of women in positions of political power. I say so because women in our society have generally been very sound managers of the households. Their patience, their tolerance and their capabilities in discharging household responsibilities are qualities and attributes which need induction into the political world to make it conducive to development and to probity. For sometime now, political participation of

women in partnership with men has also come to be discussed all over the world, including in India. In the Eleventh Lok Sabha, a Bill was also introduced for reservation of seats in Parliament for women. My reference is to the introduction of the 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill. While there seemed to be an overall appreciation of the idea, differences on modalities of reservation were rather sharp. The North-Eastern States, with significantly lesser number of parliamentary constituencies, throw up their own special and peculiar problems in the matter of reservation for women. These problems need to be addressed in this Conference, so that appropriate policy inputs could be given to the Government of India, if and when it pursues the issue of Constitutional Amendment.

With these words and with immense pleasure, I inaugurate this Conference. I wish the Conference all success. Thank you for your kind attention.

AMBEDKAR—RELEVANCE OF HIS THOUGHTS*

It gives me great pleasure to be amidst you here today. And I consider it an honour to preside over the inauguration of this National Seminar on 'Dr. B.R. Ambedkar—Relevance of His Thoughts'. It is our good fortune to have amidst us the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Chakravartula Rangarajan, an eminent economist, a perceptive thinker and an erudite scholar who is gracious enough to inaugurate this Seminar and give an intellectual start-off to the event.

Friends, Ambedkar's is one name which chokes our hearts with emotion and fills our heads with gratitude. Our attachment to him is such that it would not easily allow an intellectual perspective to emerge on the relevance of his thoughts. Yet, there is a persistent need to re-examine his thinking in the context of the changing socio-political scenario of contemporary India. Such an appraisal would definitely help us to understand better the relevance of Ambedkar's thinking in addressing some of the vital questions that have been plaguing our society and burning issues that have been nagging our nation for a long time.

Ambedkar was endowed with an intellectual vigour that is rarely seen in men. Though trained as a lawyer, he became a leader by destiny, of a cause that was to be the all-consuming passion of his life. It was a historic quest for social justice. In pursuit of this mission, he participated in mass movements, launching an onslaught against the very foundations of an inegalitarian society. Out of this movement emerged a social scientist, a free thinker, a gifted writer and a constitutionalist of eminence. His writings and speeches amply reflect all these varied aspects of his multi-faceted personality acquired under circumstances that were so debilitating that a lesser mortal would have given up. But Ambedkar fought with a rock-like resolve, armed with a keen intellect

*At the inauguration of a National Seminar on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar—Relevance of His Thoughts organised by the A.P. State Government BC, SC and ST Employees Association, Hyderabad (20 February 1999).

and a solid confidence. Out of this ordeal emerged a sharp mind that could analyse any problem with stunning precision. It was this quality that stood him apart from others.

As a perceptive thinker, Ambedkar drew upon his immense intellectual capacities to find lasting solutions to the long vexed social problems of our country. As a social scientist and statesman, Ambedkar wrote extensively on most issues that were relevant to his times. But, the uniqueness of Ambedkar's thinking is such that its relevance has not diminished even one bit with the passage of time. If any thing, his thoughts would be of great help for us to understand and analyse the socio-political problems of our times. This is the real test of a visionary, his views must survive long after life snuffs out of him. Therefore, it is always a paying proposition to study Ambedkar to enrich our understanding and sharpen our analysis of the various problems facing our society. Thus, the varied contributions of such an individual deserve to be evaluated in the right perspective.

Much as we admire and appreciate Ambedkar and his vision, he is a much misunderstood man. There are attempts, from time to time, in certain quarters to grossly misinterpret him. In a way, this is a fate suffered by all great men who have endeavoured to change the course of history. Those who imagine that their interests are adversely affected by such endeavours seek to lampoon the individuals who lead movements to set right the wrongs of history. But, can we hurt a hill by throwing stones at it? Neither can an ocean be dried by draining water out of it! These are exercises in futility attempted by vain men with ill-digested understanding. We cannot be complacent and remain mute witnesses when an eminent person is misrepresented for partisan reasons. But, what should be our response? Book-burning and agitation or an intellectual debate? I would choose the second option any day because an intellectual debate would do greater honour to the person. Violence is not a weapon through which anybody's honour is upheld. Therefore, I am, indeed, very glad that this exercise is undertaken and I feel proud to be associated with it.

Many interesting topics are listed for discussion and I understand that learned men from the civil services, Judiciary, media and academia would participate in the deliberations on the theme subjects. In this context, I would like to suggest that there are many issues on which Ambedkar's writings and speeches have not come to light. It would be of great service if some of the participants and presenters can highlight the hitherto unpublished aspects of

Ambedkar's ideology. He held views which appeared radical at that time but proved relevant with the passage of time. That is why he was described a 'creative iconoclast' by Justice Krishna Iyer. There is an attempt to belittle his significance by confining him almost entirely to the question of Dalit uplift. Though that was a crucial concern for him, his contribution is no less significant in other spheres like economy, polity, secularism and foreign relations which need to be highlighted to broaden the appeal of Ambedkar's thinking to the non-Dalit sections of society.

Friends, when we discuss Ambedkar's ideology, we must place him in the larger context of his fight against casteism than confine him merely to the question of job reservations for the down-trodden sections. Reservation is not the end of his fight. It is only a beginning, a first step in a long drawn struggle against a system that is too deep-rooted to be shaken in a life time. The struggle has to be carried on at different levels such as political, social, cultural and intellectual, in pursuit of the larger goal of building a brave new society where all castes may enjoy equal status. Ambedkar was not fighting against any particular caste but against casteism as such which discriminates one caste against another and divides people on that basis, thereby weakening the social fabric. Therefore, what we need to do today is to focus on Ambedkar's ideology to annihilate casteism.

In this context, it would be interesting to study his views on the elements and factors that promote the scourge of casteism. While we adopted parliamentary democracy fifty years ago on the lofty principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice, the menace of casteism has hampered the realization of our dream. Today, almost every aspect of our polity and society is plagued by casteism. We see its tentacles spread everywhere. Therefore, the question before us is how to redeem ourselves from this grip and how Babasaheb's ideology will help us in that endeavour.

If these issues are discussed and debated over the next two days in the light of Ambedkar's ideology, the exercise is worth its while. Seminars and symposia offer an ambience that is conducive for a dispassionate and detailed discussion on various issues of the subject under consideration. This is not possible on a public podium where the appeal is more to the emotion than to the intellect. A gathering of intellectuals like this is insulated from the passions of the ordinary man. Therefore, you must bring to light rather dispassionately the issues which will help to carry on Ambedkar's crusade to its logical end—that is, building a society where all sections of people can

live in peace and harmony, enjoying opportunities without discrimination. This is the tribute we can pay to the memory of our beloved leader. We need not worry about the relevance of Ambedkar's thought. As Mahatma Gandhi once remarked, "Ambedkar is not a man to allow himself to be forgotten". The question before us is how best we can use Ambedkar's ideology as a weapon to fight casteism.

I congratulate the Government of Andhra Pradesh for sponsoring this Seminar. I wish the organisers success in their endeavour. And, I hope the deliberations will be intellectually stimulating to create political revitalism and social regeneration for which Ambedkar lived and laid down his life.

Thank you.

STRATEGIES FOR THE UPLIFT OF DALITS*

It gives me pleasure to be here amidst you in the intellectual ambience of the National Seminar on Strategies for Sustained Socio-economic and Political Development of Dalits. The subject is comprehensive enough to cover every aspect of the development of Dalits—a community which has been caught up between two different worlds: advancement of a few on the one hand and adversity of the many on the other. The challenge before the country is how to bring about all-round development of the community that has suffered oppression and suppression in every aspect of life for thousands of years. It is a question that has been plaguing society for too long without, however, yielding any tangible results so far.

Before endeavouring to evolve strategies for the development of Dalits, it is necessary to have a sufficient understanding of what it means to be a Dalit in the Indian context. The problems of Dalits are very specific to them which others will not easily understand because thousands of years of oppression and suppression, enslavement and exploitation, marginalisation and maltreatment have taken their toll on the community's psyche by instilling in them an attitude of acceptance and apathy, resignation and renunciation. Therefore, any strategy of development must first break this attitude of acceptance and apathy and galvanise the community towards change. That this has happened not much long back is known to all of us. It is only with the arrival of Dr. Ambedkar on the scene that the concerns of Dalits found a serious expression through his writings and speeches.

That is why it is difficult for Dalits to speak about Babasaheb without being overwhelmed by emotion. Such is their sense of gratitude to him because of his supreme service to the community which suffered one of the worst treatments in all recorded history the world over. They bore this ill-treatment silently for centuries together till Ambedkar came on the scene and vehemently

*Valedictory speech at the National Seminar on Strategies for Sustained Socio-economic and Political Development of Dalits, Hyderabad (30 April 1999).

questioned the appalling reality around him. Before him, there were a few leaders who led agitations for the removal of untouchability and fought for their betterment. But they lacked Ambedkar's western education, intellectual insight, clarity of thought and felicity of expression which facilitated him in his fight for their rights.

Because of Ambedkar's tireless efforts, Dalits have been given certain amount of constitutional guarantees for their uplift and it is only with these provisions coming into operation in 1950, that efforts have been afoot to extricate them from an existence of apathy and resignation to a life of action and rejuvenation. Though the results are not wholly pleasing, that is no reason to slacken the struggle for assertion and identity. After all, fifty years is too short a span of time, however full of activity it may be, to overcome the conditions of downtroddenness inherited over the millennia.

It is only when we fully realise how much we are exploited and marginalised that we can carry on the struggle for our rightful place and meaningful identity in society. But, such struggles must be conscious of the long periods of silent suffering which breeds a sense of acceptance deep into the psyche and therefore the results cannot be quick and reassuring. We must, therefore, break this psyche of inferiority complex and instil confidence in the struggle to overcome a life of marginalisation. It is a responsibility that must be shouldered by the mainstream society. In India, this responsibility is felt in formal terms largely by the State and not by the society. That is why our progress is slow. Had the society given its whole-hearted support to this process, our progress could have been more accelerated. But unfortunately, that is not so. Yet, we must not lose our patience by resorting to unconstitutional methods of struggle, even as we must carry on the struggle for justice.

If we look at the social picture today, we find that whatever benefits Dalits get are because of the law and not due to the willing cooperation of society. For example, Dalits are fielded only in those constituencies which are reserved for them by law. Is there an example of a Dalit being fielded from a general constituency? Hardly any, and why is it so? Why are the political parties reluctant to give more representation to Dalits than what is the minimum stipulated by law? It is the same story of tokenism in the case of employment. Of course, we have noticed that even filling up this limited quota for Dalits is often niggardly, erratic and reluctant. Otherwise, there could not be so much backlog of vacancies for SC and ST categories while there is no dearth of educated young men among Dalits.

All this goes to show that while the society is indifferent, the State is perfunctory in its role of uplifting Dalits from the condition of downtroddenness to a life of development and dignity. The question before us is how to overcome this social apathy and official paternalism. Therefore, the need of the hour is solidarity among the community because without solidarity they cannot assert themselves. But solidarity comes only when there is a common identity and luckily this identity has already come about in the name of 'Dalit'. Having got an identity with which we can reinforce solidarity, the task before us today is to use this solidarity to raise the level of consciousness of the community. This can pave the way for consolidating the gains accrued to us in independent India. Unless we believe in the possibility of our goal, we will not be able to pursue it vigorously. While our goal of leading a life of dignity and honour is certainly within the realm of the possible, we have to go a long way in our struggle to achieve it.

In this context, it is essential that we take symbols for what they are and not beyond. In other words, a Dalit becoming the President of the Republic or the Speaker of Lok Sabha does not reflect the reality of the community's political progress. Symbolism must instil in us a sense of confidence and not breed complacency. Therefore, the key lies in the sustainability of our progress and not in symbolic gestures. That means we have to take our struggle to the rock bottom of the society to gain society's acceptance of our legitimate aspirations. This calls for radical changes at the structural level in the spheres of education, economy, culture, polity and society. We must be able to identify the areas where we need to struggle hard to reach our goal and we have to struggle for success in all these fields.

Admittedly, economic foundation is a must for social progress and political recognition. For a community which does not have any hold over resources like land, capital, etc., we need to equip ourselves with educational skills to generate employment opportunities. It is a fact that a majority of Dalits are far too backward in education, despite the progress some sections have made since Independence. But, the education we pursue must not produce unemployed youth out of productive and able men.

We must also emphasise the need for rigorous family planning and smaller families on the one hand and an effective implementation of land reforms on the other. Land holds a great deal of social prestige in an agrarian society like ours. Dalits being agricultural labourers or engaged in other menial jobs, land could offer them a first ray of hope upon which they can build a future.

I say this because any sustainable development must start from the grassroot level and spread upward. I am sure all these issues must have come in for a detailed and dispassionate discussion in the Seminar leading to the development of a clear perspective on this age-old question of the development of Dalits.

I am glad that the National Institute of Research and Social Action has taken the initiative to hold a National Seminar on a comprehensive subject. I wish the Institute all the very best in its future endeavours.

Thank you.

THE ROLE OF A SARPANCH IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me immense pleasure to be here with the *Sarpanchs* of Andhra Pradesh amidst the presence of our dynamic and beloved Chief Minister Shri Chandrababu Naidu.

Friends, we have gathered here to discuss a subject of vital importance: "Panchayat Raj System—*Sarpanchs*' Responsibility". As people engaged in public service through political work, we are all aware of the pivotal significance that the Panchayat Raj system holds in our parliamentary democratic framework. When we adopted parliamentary democratic polity as the system of governance after Independence, we had very little, if any, experience with the nuances of a modern democratic system. The leaders of our freedom struggle who were western educated had seen the way representative institutions worked in Britain which is widely regarded as the mother of parliamentary democracy.

But the people of India at large did not know much about democracy due to illiteracy on the one hand and being bred in the monarchical tradition of autocratic rule on the other, in which the welfare of the people depended on the sweet will of the king. That being the historic reality of our society, it was felt necessary to create institutions that would give grassroot training to our people in the villages in the art of self-governance. The Panchayat Raj system was born out of a realisation of the need to rejuvenate and reorient the teeming millions of rural Indians in order to make a success of the newly adopted democratic framework for the governance of free India.

In this system, the *Sarpanch*, naturally, occupies a pivotal position as he is the chief executive officer of the self-governing mechanism at the village level. The philosophy underlining the system is two-fold. One is training in self-governance and the other is the principle of democratic decentralisation

*At the Conference on "Panchayat Raj System—*Sarpanchs*' Responsibility", Hyderabad (10 June 1999).

of authority. The process of electing ward members and a *Sarpanch* by the people on the basis of adult universal franchise is intended *inter alia* to educate people on how to exercise the vote in the elections for higher institutions like the Assembly and the Parliament.

Once the Panchayat is constituted, it is the responsibility of the *Sarpanch* to provide leadership to the village in a number of ways. Much of the developmental activity in our State is routed through the Panchayat Raj system. While the welfare schemes of the government are implemented by the revenue administration, the developmental work is handled by the Panchayats. This calls for understanding and vision on the part of the *Sarpanch* to identify the problem areas in consultation with his Panchayat Council and mobilise resources to undertake the desired activities.

Be it the construction of schools, provision of drinking water, rural sanitation, rural electrification, management of village assets like ponds, tanks, construction of roads, market places, etc. are all handled by the Panchayat Presidents. This calls for frequent interaction with the government machinery at the district level, with officers in the Collectorate and the Zilla Parishad for discussing the specific problems of the respective villages. Now-a-days, the members of Legislatures and Parliaments have also been given constituency development funds to give a boost to rural development. Therefore, the *Sarpanchs* have to maintain cordial relations with MLAs and MPs in order to get a share from such funds for the benefit of their villages. If you show enterprise and initiative, dynamism and determination as Panchayat Presidents, this experience will stand you in good stead as leaders and Ministers when you grow up in politics and rise to higher positions.

Here, I must caution you to be mindful of the complex nature of the rural social structure. The village consists of many castes and communities belonging to dominant sections, weaker sections, minorities, etc. The village *Sarpanch* has a responsibility to take various sections into confidence and build consensus on the developmental schemes to be taken up. No segment of the society must be left out in the process of consensus building exercise. That is the test of leadership in politics. A leader's success lies in his ability to take others with him. If he can achieve success at the village level, he will be successful at higher levels as a leader and as an administrator. Therefore, the position of Panchayat President is one of responsibility in a very real sense. In order to fulfil this responsibility and learn various aspects of democratic governance, a tenure of five years is given to you. This will ensure continuity in a real sense in the context of developmental activity and security in the context of holding an office to function freely and fearlessly.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh, under the dynamic leadership of our beloved Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, has devised many schemes like *Janmabhoomi*, *Sharmadanam*, *Prajala vaddaku palana* and "Vision 2020" in which the Panchayats have been given ample opportunities to play a constructive role and build a *Swarnandhra Pradesh* in the next millennium.

I want you to make a success of these schemes to achieve rural development and make Andhra Pradesh a model of excellence for the rest of India. We are first among the States in India alphabetically. We must strive to be first in all-round development also.

Thank you.

ELECTRICITY—A VITAL INGREDIENT OF DEVELOPMENT*

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to be here with you all today to lay the foundation stone of the electrical sub-station and to inaugurate the Tribal *Mela*.

Today, rural development is advocated as a basic strategy for over-all economic development and improving the quality of life. With 85 per cent of India's population living in 5.79 lakhs villages, electrification is one of the main infrastructural needs of the rural people. No other person had a better understanding of rural development than Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. In 1936, he said: "I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its villages....If the village perishes, India will perish too". Self-sufficiency and provision of basic needs must, therefore, be two of the important goals of our rural development.

Electricity plays a crucial role in both industrial and agricultural sectors and, therefore, consumption of electricity in the country is an indicator of productivity and growth. However, the demand for electricity has been growing at a rate faster than that for other forms of energy. In spite of concerted efforts to improve the power situation, there is always a shortage of electricity and the disparity between demand and supply is widening with passing time. However, I am glad to learn that all the villages in our State have been electrified. It is indeed an honour for us, the people of Andhra Pradesh.

Friends, from the busy metropolitan cities to the charming remote little villages, from the multi-storey buildings of the capital to mud huts embedded in sprawling mountains, we live with people drawn from different communities and from different religions and different customs. Life in our country is a mix of colourful events. The rich diversity of India's population has given us festivals more abundant than those of any other culture. These

*At the function to lay the Foundation Stone of Electrical Sub-station and inauguration of Tribal *Mela*, Koddam, Adilabad Dist., Andhra Pradesh (4 October 1998).

festivals are not merely formal occasions but deep-rooted traditions and customs woven into the fabric of Indian life. The Tribal *Mela* which is being organised here, I am sure, will definitely help in popularising tribal cultures, arts and crafts.

Our large tribal population spread through the length and breadth of the country has a lot to contribute towards the national life. Of late, tribal societies have been undergoing a tremendous transformation. The constitutional safeguards provided to the tribals have brought about a great deal of change in their life. This has helped them to develop socially and economically.

The objective of organising a Tribal *Mela* is to create bonds and links of togetherness among the indigenous and tribal people and to promote their cultural talent. There is a pertinent need for the amalgamation of tribal cultures, their arts and crafts into our mainstream culture. I hope that this Tribal *Mela* would bring about the integration of our tribal brethren with the rest of the country.

I wish the organisers all success and congratulate all those who have been associated one way or the other with this electrical sub-station and Tribal *Mela*. I hope to see the generation of power at Koddam taking shape with the same pace as we move from the stage of conceiving this idea to that of laying the foundation stone.

Thank you.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS— DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION*

It gives me immense pleasure to be amidst you today. Rural development is an important aspect of India's developmental challenges. Rural development requires our concerted efforts for achieving overall prosperity and well-being of the entire population of India. Though the process of economic liberalisation and reforms have brought about much progress in urban areas, our rural areas continue to grapple with the myriad problems ranging from inadequate minimum basic services to unemployment. Over the years, we have initiated a number of poverty alleviation and developmental programmes targeting the rural people under the Five-Year Plans. But, the rate of rural development is not upto our expectations.

It is a fact that even today many remote villages have barely any symbols of development and modernity. Rural areas in India are still characterised by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, etc. The flaws in our approach to rural development and in the implementation of various programmes need to be removed. Facts have revealed that only a fraction of every rupee spent on rural development actually reaches the beneficiary. Unless we quicken the pace of rural development and streamline schemes for rural areas, we will not be able to ensure a decent living for large sections of our people. In our country, three-fourths of the population or more than 700 million people live in rural areas. Truly, India lives in its villages even in this cyber age and any neglect of rural areas will only widen the disparity in income between urban India and rural India.

Agriculture is still the mainstay of rural economy. Investment in rural agriculture is a primary step to a healthy rural economy. Infrastructure facilities in rural areas like roads, telecommunication, hospitals and schools are essential for rural development and prosperity. We need strategies which can provide immediate relief to rural people by way of higher income and long term

*On "Rural Development in India—Drinking Water and Sanitation", Hyderabad (10 June 1999).

steps for basic and sustainable rural development. An equitable and just distribution of wealth should be a vital part of rural development. It is also important that incentives are given to entrepreneurs to set up ventures in rural areas which will have a multiplier impact on the rural economy. The problems and challenges in rural development in a vast country like India are quite daunting and gigantic. Only well conceived plans backed by resources, an efficient administration and popular participation can bring the desired level of progress in rural areas and provide adequate means of livelihood to the rural people.

Along with macro level development in rural areas, we have to address other micro level issues like drinking water and sanitation which are important in providing a better quality of life. As the rural areas too experience huge population increase, it results in deteriorating quality of life and shortage of drinking water. In many areas in the country, people have to walk long distances to collect water and quite often water available is not fit for human consumption. Adequate and safe drinking water supply is essential to avoid the outbreak of diseases.

Rural sanitation assumes greater significance with increasing pressure on land and dwelling units. Proper sanitation is a requirement to avoid many health problems and to facilitate better quality of life. According to the National Sample Survey, only about 10.96 per cent of rural households have access to sanitary facilities. Our efforts under various government-sponsored programmes to improve rural sanitation need to be further supplemented by creating an awareness in the rural people about the need for better sanitation. The Panchayati Raj Institutions and the elected representatives should provide leadership in this matter. It is heartening that many voluntary agencies are also contributing to better rural sanitation facilities.

The provision of drinking water in rural areas is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments. But the Central Government has also launched many programmes to provide drinking water in rural areas. A National Drinking Water Mission was launched in 1985. In 1986, there were more than 1.5 lakh villages in India without even one source of safe drinking water. It is a praiseworthy effort that a problem of such magnitude could be tackled in just about a decade. By March 1998, only 60 villages remained uncovered by the scheme and without any source of safe drinking water supply. In terms of population, 92.65 per cent of rural population are benefited under the National Drinking Water Mission by March 1998 and have now access to drinking water supply.

However, it is clear that there is no scope for complacency. Many areas even today are only partially covered and people find it difficult to meet their entire drinking water requirement. The demand and consumption of water will definitely go up due to population rise and other reasons. Other major related problems are drought, lowering water table, over-exploitation of ground water resources, etc. Environmental pollution and changes in ecology, etc. will have an adverse effect on drinking water sources also. It is essential to ensure that our developmental efforts are least damaging to the environment and are planned on a sustainable basis. It is time we incorporated environmental protection measures and the concept of sustainable development in rural development more vigorously.

Friends, it is imperative to take urgent and effective measures for an accelerated rural development. We must build greater awareness among rural people towards these issues and also provide required technological and financial resources and efficient institutional facilities for rural development.

Thank you.

RURAL TELEPHONY—AN URGENT NEED*

I am happy to be here amidst you. First of all, I take this opportunity to thank the officials of the Department of Telecommunications for having invited me to inaugurate the commissioning of C-DOT SBM 1K, in this new building of Kothapeta Telephone Exchange.

It is heartening to note that with the commissioning of this new system, this telephone exchange will be able to offer better service on professional lines to the people of this town. May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the engineers and technical personnel of the Department with whose efforts, this new system is being commissioned today. This could be possible because the Indian telecom sector is characterised by a high degree of professional and technological know-how. I feel proud in saying that India is the first developing country in the world to have set up indigenous manufacturing of telecom equipment, including sophisticated telephone exchanges.

As you are aware, India operates one of the largest telecom networks in Asia comprising over 23,527 exchanges with a capacity of about 226.4 lakh lines and over 191.3 lakh working connections. A switching capacity of 35.19 lakh lines was added during 1997-98, which is 13 per cent more than that of 1996-97. According to the National Telecom Policy, 1994, one Village Public Telephone (VPT) in every village of the country was to be provided by 1997. This target has since been rescheduled and is now envisaged to be achieved by the end of the Ninth Plan. Once this is accomplished, it could prove to be the harbinger of a new communication revolution in the country.

Communication and information are the lifeline of the nation. It is only through an extensive telecommunication network that a country of our size and dimension can be accessed to and reached from one part to the other. It

*At the commissioning of a Telephone Exchange, Kothapeta, East Godavari Dist. (28 December 1998).

is perhaps due to the strides made in information technology, that the entire world has come to be known as a 'global village' today.

Friends, in our country, more than 70 per cent of the population lives in the rural areas. Providing basic telecom services to the rural areas is of vital importance for the development of our nation. In fact, 'rural connectivity' was one of the major thrusts of the Eighth Plan. One of the objectives of even the National Telecom Policy, formulated in 1994, was to achieve universal service coverage in the country and to ensure world standard service to the consumers. The proposed draft Telecom Policy of 1999, which is going to be finalised during the Ninth Plan period, also seeks to make telecommunication universal and affordable. I am sure that this exchange would cater to the needs of telecom consumers and subscribers with this avowed objective.

Friends, as we are going to enter into the next century, we are also standing at the threshold of a telecom revolution. Telecom revolution, however, should not mean that only a few cities are well connected by it but the entire nation should be covered under the gamut of such a revolution.

With these words, I am happy to inaugurate this new exchange system.

Thank you.

RURAL LIBRARIES—INFORMAL SCHOOLS*

I deem it a great pleasure to be here for the inauguration of the building which is going to house a library.

The earlier concept of library which was to house a few books and serve a few scholars has undergone a sea change and today public libraries have assumed greater importance than ever before. One basic role of the library is to inculcate, feed and nurture a reading habit. Reading habit, once infused in the individual, will endow him with a life-long passion which will continue to inspire him and add new dimensions to his personality all through his life. Therefore, libraries must serve as social institutions of mass education. It is well accepted that education of the common man is very essential for the successful functioning of a democracy. So, any move towards spreading mass education backed by well-equipped public libraries will surely make a positive impact in strengthening democracy in a country like India. I find it encouraging to know that in several States, many rural and primary unit libraries are serving very well as adult education centres. The public library, indeed, must serve as the people's university where all should have full and free access to its facilities.

Friends, by serving the masses, public libraries, to a certain extent, help us in our programmes for the removal of illiteracy. Today, what we need is a systematic development of the infrastructure of libraries to integrate literacy and educational programmes and activities with the information systems evolved in the wake of new information technology at all levels. Under the impact of growing socio-economic complexity and the increasing demand for information from all quarters, the role of public libraries has, in fact, undergone a radical transformation. Apart from lending an informal educational support, the public library should serve as a community resource centre. The potter, the weaver, the fisherman or the farmer—all need the latest information

*At the inauguration of Library Building at Kothapeta, East Godavari Dist. (29 January 1999).

about market, about credit facilities or the latest innovations in their fields while a doctor or an engineer seeks current professional information — all from public libraries. Thus, public libraries, developed with a broad base, can prove to be of great help to one and all.

In consonance with the developmental needs of our society, we have made good progress in providing public library service to our urban citizens. Still, more is required to be done in so far as our rural folks are concerned. It is high time that the library services are extended to cover the whole of rural India for dissemination of up-to-date information to the majority of our people residing in villages. Besides helping in providing up-to-date information, public libraries must also cater to the recreational needs of people in their leisure time. In a country like ours, libraries can, indeed, serve as powerful centres in the transformation of culture from generation to generation.

Friends, the traditional concept of library system has changed. Now the library professionals should also be ready to accept new responsibilities to meet the society's changing needs and demands. They must accept the challenges of self-education of the individual to make democracy stable and safe. Therefore, libraries must play a vital role in the development of social and democratic values and ideals, besides the eradication of illiteracy and the retention of newly acquired literacy.

I hope the proposed library would prove to be a welcome step towards achieving the advancement of the people of the area.

Thank you.

SPORTS—A MEANS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION*

It gives me great pleasure to be here amidst you all at the 29th All India Rural Sports Tournament being organised at Nellore. Indeed, I am delighted to see rural youth from all over the country—17 States and 2 Union territories participating in various events.

It goes without saying that sports and sportsmanship are vitally important for the growth of any country. It is the spirit of sportsmanship and friendly rivalry that must inform and influence various aspects of national endeavour. Needless to say, all of us, especially the youth, should imbibe the qualities of team spirit and discipline which are necessary to compete in sports.

I am sure you would all agree that there is an imperative for laying stress on improving the standards of various sports disciplines, so that the country's presence is felt in the world of sport. We have to carry sports and games to every town, every village and indeed to every home. Mass participation in sports is a must not only for the health, fitness and strength of the nation, but also for raising our sports standards. This apart, sports and games play a significant role in strengthening the bonds of unity and integration among different castes and communities and also in bringing various countries and peoples together. Besides, it inculcates qualities of discipline in the youth of the country and orients them into leading a constructive life. I feel that some minimum sports facilities such as play fields, etc. must be provided in villages and towns for the people at large. Equally important is the need to create sports consciousness among the people, so that once sports facilities have become available, the people feel motivated to put them to use. For proper development of sports, it is vital that sports and physical education become an essential part of the school education system. We have to create an environment in the country where sports and games are considered as absolutely essential part of the child's growth.

*At the Valedictory function of the 29th All India Rural Sports Tournament at Nellore, Andhra Pradesh (19 December 1998).

It would not be out of place to mention here that sustained international competitive exposure and rigorous training within and outside the country are a vital requirement for excelling in sports. For meeting the genuine needs of our meritorious sports persons, all of us—the Central Government, the State Governments and others—have to join hands and make our contributions to this cause. It is only then that sports can become a way of life with us.

Friends, I am sorry to say that a country of India's size and stature has not been able to achieve the desired results in international sporting events. One simple reason for the failure of such a large population to produce world-class athletes is that a vast majority of our people do not have an opportunity to realise their potential. Rapid urbanisation has drastically reduced the space available for children in the metropolitan cities to play. And with organised sports in urban centres being concentrated on a few lucrative games like cricket, tennis and golf, there is little scope for those interested in other sports to even become aware of their talents. The rural child may be luckier in terms of having more space, but there are hardly any infrastructural facilities in rural areas.

It is against the backdrop of India's poor performance in sports in the international arena that we must implement the national sports policy. The major thrust should be to identify the talents from the childhood itself not only from urban centres but also from rural areas. As soon as we identify talented children, we must groom them properly. All incentives and encouragements should be provided to budding sportspersons. They should be given proper nutrition and diet, besides the requisite training and coaching. If these cannot be provided in the villages, budding athletes from rural areas can be brought to cities and towns where training and coaching facilities are available. Infrastructural facilities such as stadia and sports complexes and coaching centres should be provided at least in important towns in various States.

Yet another thing which I would like to emphasise is that it is only through collective endeavour that we can hope to achieve excellence in sports. In this regard, the Government alone cannot do much. I am happy that in recent times the corporate sector has been playing an important role in the promotion of sports. The corporate world is not only sponsoring tournaments and sports but are also offering employment opportunities to successful players in their organisations. More and more jobs should be reserved for successful persons who have excelled in sports events and meets at the State, national and international levels. The Government and the corporate sector should institute more scholarships and stipends for promising players.

Teachers and parents have also an important role in identifying and grooming budding players and athletes. They should be motivated to put in their best. It is only through sustained hard work, years of regular practice, dedication and devotion that our players can hope to climb to a higher pedestal of performance in different sports.

Before I conclude, I would like to congratulate the award winners for their achievements and hope that more people will win awards in future. I would also like to heartily compliment all those who have been associated with this event.

Thank you.

NCC FOR DISCIPLINE AND LEADERSHIP AMONG THE YOUTH*

It is indeed a matter of great pleasure for me to associate myself with your Sailing Expedition in this beautiful river of Andhra Pradesh. Let me take this opportunity to thank Air Commodore Deoskar and his team for having invited me here and given me a chance to get a feel of this exciting sport. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the participants as also the organisers for this successful feat. I am very happy to note that you have successfully completed the first two phases of this exciting and adventurous event. This will add yet another feather to the crowded cap of the National Cadet Corps (NCC). It is through such accomplishments that we come closer towards realizing the objectives for which the NCC was established.

Over the past decades, the NCC has grown into a powerful forum for bringing about a sense of integration and fostering spirit of belongingness and attachment to our land among the youth. The NCC, with its army-oriented training, has been proving itself capable of inculcating qualities of discipline and leadership into the youth of the country, thereby orienting them into leading a constructive life in the service of the nation. For the society at large, in fact, our cadets are like role models who often come in for high praise for their exemplary performance, both in the fields of physical endurance and cultural abilities.

Friends, though the NCC has always been praised for its accomplishments in various fields, sometimes a very pertinent question about it comes up before me—why is it that, in spite of having this specialised youth body, today, we are experiencing a shortfall in the recruitment in officer cadres for our armed forces? If you can recall, the NCC Act of 1948 had visualised the corps as a reserve to enable the armed forces to expand rapidly in a national emergency. It was perceived that the NCC cadets would be provided rudimentary military training, would be encouraged to take up adventurous

*At the function to launch off the Third Phase of Sailing Expedition of the NCC Cadets of Andhra Pradesh Directorate, Rajahmundry (2 September 1998).

sports and would get a hands-on experience of military life without actually donning the service uniform. Such a close-quarter encounter with military life, it was hoped, would encourage cadets to choose a career in the armed forces.

But, I believe the statistics are quite disturbing. There must be something wrong somewhere. Is it that all their spirit of adventure and sportsmanship vanishes with the end of their college days? Or is it because every one of them is getting carried away by the materialistic culture creeping into our society? Today, we all need to ponder over these issues very seriously. I still believe, with proper orientation, encouragement and motivation, we can succeed in converting the NCC as a reservoir of youth which can be tapped for nation-building activities and as a channel to fill the gap in the officer ranks of our armed forces.

I am sure initiatives like organising adventure sports and rigorous training would help in encouraging and sustaining the interest of our youth in our armed forces and other larger national issues. It is quite encouraging to see such a large number of young cadets taking part in sailing. In spite of India being gifted with a very long coastline and hundreds of rivers conducive for sailing, this sport is yet to gain popularity in the country.

Traditionally, sailing is considered a sport of the rich. But today in various parts of the world, especially in Europe and North America, this is a very popular sport among the youth and the middle-aged alike, of all classes.

There are several clubs in these countries to encourage and sustain interest in this sport among the young people. As you all may be knowing, it was the spirit of adventure of the sea-faring people of Europe that contributed to several important geographical discoveries and towards building of bridges between peoples of the world.

Dear young cadets, I hope the exposure and experience you gain through your association with the NCC would motivate you in venturing into even greater adventures in life, especially in the service of our country. You all are privileged to be getting such unique opportunities. I hope you will make the best out of it. Remember, our Forces offer a more adventurous life, greater opportunities and even greater challenges. I wish the very best to all the participants and pray that you have a smooth and exciting sailing now and in your career ahead. With these words, I am happy to flag off the final phase of your Sailing Expedition.

Thank you.

SCHOOL EDUCATION — FOUNDATION FOR ADULT LIFE*

It is an auspicious occasion that this school is going to have a permanent building of its own and I find it an honour to be invited to lay the foundation stone of the proposed building for this school.

The Andhra Education Society is rendering yeoman service to the Telugu speaking community of Delhi by providing excellent educational facilities at the school level. They deserve rich encomiums for their noble endeavour of spreading the light of education to the Andhra children of Delhi in their native ambience of Telugu culture, tradition and language. Just as the country is celebrating fifty years of Independence, the Andhra Education Society, Delhi must also celebrate its fiftieth year of existence befittingly and we must all involve ourselves in the celebrations as this is our institution.

Friends, school education is a very crucial stage in our lives as it is here that the seed is sown and as time passes by, the seed comes to fruition and the child grows into a mature adult. Therefore, it is imperative that the right kind of seed is sown at the school. This involves inculcating right ideas such as respect for elders, respect for our culture and traditions, respect for punctuality, respect for books, respect for environment, awareness regarding health and hygiene, etc., to mention a few things. As the child grows into a mature person, these ideas blossom into a perspective. And a perspective is what makes the human personality complete and such personality is essential for building a good society and a good nation. This is possible only through education.

But, what is education? In the words of Swami Vivekananda: 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into our brain which runs riot undigested all through our lives. It is a process of man-making, character-forming and life-building assimilation of ideas'. In this great endeavour, the

*At the function to lay the Foundation Stone of the Andhra School Building, Janakpuri, New Delhi (28 April 1998).

school and the teacher play a very sensitive role because it is in the school that a child first comes in touch with a different environment outside the home, meets his peers from diverse backgrounds and encounters the first authority in his life—the school teacher with a stick and a menacing look! May be, the stick and the look have their uses or else why is it said : 'spare the rod and spoil the child'!

To be meaningful, the school must provide an environment which the home cannot, such as playing facilities, reading facilities and the like. Schooling must lay an adequate emphasis on extra-curricular activities apart from studies. This calls for creating an environment for the growth of mind and body like providing for sporting, literary and leisure activities such as quiz, debate, elocution, writing, acting, etc., which are essential for the child to grow into a mature person. In other words, proper infrastructure is essential for, without adequate infrastructure a school is like a good car without tyres! A child's growth of mind and body cannot be accomplished under the trees, however good the teaching be!

On the other hand, however good a school be, without able and efficient teachers, it would be like a wonderful car without a driver. A school's reputation depends to a great deal on the spirit of its teachers. Unlike other callings, teaching is not just a job but it is a profession, nay an emotion! The bond between a teacher and his school is unique. It is often said that a good teacher is more at home in the school amidst his students than in the house amidst his family. Aristotle once remarked that teachers who educate children deserve more honour than parents who merely give them birth. His pupil, Alexander the Great, reciprocated the sentiment by saying thus: "I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well." Nearer home, Mahatma Gandhi said: "I have always felt that the true text-book for the pupil is his teacher!"

I am very glad to learn that schools run by the Andhra Education Society have built up an enviable reputation over the years. This is borne out by the fact that the local people are also showing keenness to put their wards in these schools. The Delhi Government has also recognised the merit of these schools and commended this particular school as one of the ten best schools in Delhi. In this age of top ten craze, it is a matter of immense satisfaction for the Telugus of Delhi that their school is one of the ten best in town. If this is the eminence achieved on rented premises, I am sure a great distinction is in store for this school, once its own building and other infrastructure are ready in due course.

I sincerely commend the excellence achieved by the Andhra Education Society in providing a fine type of school education where tradition and modernity are harmoniously balanced, so that our culture is preserved within the broad framework of a secular society. I am sure, the soul of Durgabai Deshmukh, who was the spirit behind a modest venture established in 1948, would feel immensely proud of the achievements of this organisation. I take this opportunity to wish the very best to the Andhra Education Society in all its endeavours. I hope the building will come up fast and we will all gather here again.

Thank you.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION*

I am happy to participate in the inauguration of the new building of the Elimineti Laxmamma Narasareddy Memorial Government Junior College for Girls. I am thankful to the organisers for inviting me as it has given me an opportunity to renew my commitment to the cause of education.

Friends, the relevance of education to the development of a society is beyond debate. Educated citizenry is definitely an asset for any nation, as it not only strengthens society but also becomes a constant source of guidance for those who manage the affairs of the State.

With Independence, we inherited an educational system that was not only confined to a small section of our people but was also marked by acute gender and regional disparities. Taking into account the importance of education and the value of a literate population, universal education for children upto 14 years of age was recognised as a crucial input for nation-building. Accordingly, special provisions were made in the Constitution in this regard. The successive Five-Year Plans have also laid emphasis on education. However, we are yet to achieve the objective of universalisation of elementary education. The effort, therefore, has to continue and must be taken to its logical conclusion.

Since Independence, higher education has made a great expansion. This expansion has been accompanied by a remarkable diversity in terms of the growth of colleges, universities and institutions of higher learning and research. There has been an overwhelming response in the enrolment, particularly of women, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. This, in turn, has helped in redefining many of our social relationships.

It is my conviction that no society can prosper without giving women their rightful place. The issues of equality and the integration of women into

*At the inauguration of the new building of the Elimineti Laxmamma Narasareddy Memorial Government Junior College for Girls, Bhongir, Nalgonda Dist., Andhra Pradesh (4 September 1998).

the mainstream of political, economic and social life have been on the national agenda for over five decades. Nonetheless, gender disparity still exists and women lag behind men in education which, in turn, hinders their mobility and access to employment. Our National Policy on Education (NPE) visualises higher education to be dynamic in the context of unprecedented explosion of knowledge. The NPE considers education as an instrument to bring about basic changes in the status of women. It rightly emphasises that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalances by empowering women. Access to education is, thus, a prelude to social and economic equality. This new college building for girls, I am sure, will remove the space constraints and help more and more girls to enroll for intermediate education, which paves the way for higher education, thus taking yet another step in the direction of gender parity in education.

Friends, I had the opportunity of experiencing a first hand knowledge of the functioning of educational institutions in the State as the Minister of Higher Education sometime back. I am sure, we all can legitimately be proud of the achievements made by Andhra Pradesh in the field of education. The number of recognized High Schools/Junior Colleges in the State is only next to that of Maharashtra. So also is the case of recognized colleges for general education. The number is 750, next to Maharashtra's 820. Andhra Pradesh ranks third in India as far as the number of universities is concerned and fifth in the number of institutions of professional education. However, the percentage of literacy in the State is still below the national average. Same is the case in female literacy. Therefore, there is a need to redouble our efforts and commit ourselves to the eradication of illiteracy and make every single individual educated in the true sense of the term.

Education is not merely reading and writing. It must enable a person to understand the difference between right and wrong and use his knowledge for the welfare of fellow beings. The content of education, therefore, has to be enriched keeping in view the totality of the development of an individual and his responsibility to society. Education without moral values may prove to be lopsided. As such, ethical values have to be given their due place in the framework of our educational system. I would also like to call upon our teaching community to pay attention to continuously upgrade their knowledge, so that the latest developments in various fields can be passed on to the students.

With these words, I am happy to inaugurate the new building of the Elimineti Laxamma Narasareddy Memorial Government Junior College for Girls.

Thank you.

COLLEGE EDUCATION — FOUNDATION OF PERSONALITY*

I am glad to be here with you all today. At the outset, I would like to thank the management and Principal of the college for inviting me here and providing me with an opportunity to share my ideas with all of you. Such occasions provide an informal atmosphere to share and learn about many things around us. I consider the students of this college lucky in that they have got an opportunity to study in this prestigious college and be a part of its legacy. I hope they will make the most of this opportunity.

It is indeed a pleasure to learn that this institution established by Shri Kotikalapudi Govinda Rao in 1975 stands for the promotion of true education with its main focus on the lofty values of social welfare, justice and equality. Besides, it provides a valuable opportunity to the deserving and meritorious but disadvantaged sections of society to strive for excellence in the scientific field. The management, staff and students of this college have set high standards in the field of education. I congratulate the management of the college on fulfilling a social commitment by launching the Science Block and dedicating themselves to the service of this institution.

Friends, the basic aim of education is to develop the total personality of the students by broadening their intellectual horizons. Education equips us to face life with all its complexities. It is only through good education that we can achieve the all-round development of our youth and help them grow into useful citizens of the country. Education must prepare the students to face life with honesty and courage. It needs to be so designed as to help them realise their full potential. At the same time, they must also be able to interact in a creative way with the society at large because qualities like tolerance and discipline are not developed overnight but cultivated gradually from an early age in schools, colleges and universities.

*At the KGRL Degree College, Bhimavaram, West Godavari Dist., Andhra Pradesh (20 January 1999).

The time has come when our colleges should play a greater role in solving the problems of the people of the area where they are situated. The new generation of teachers and students need to be exposed to the rural economy and its problems in order to bridge the widening gap between the urban and rural areas. Moreover, the involvement of the youth has also become imperative for bringing about a change in the attitudes and expectations of the community at large.

The concept of college education is fast changing both in its structure and content. It has now been felt increasingly that higher education has to come closer to the needs, aspirations and goals of the existential situations of society. Education has to become a means of achieving national development and prosperity of the community. And those who are at the college must function as catalytic agents for bringing about socio-economic and cultural change in the country. We have to look upon our colleges not only as temples of learning but also as a social radar of the community. The significance of the role of colleges in the development of the community hardly needs any emphasis. Today we are in need of more and more trained and skilled manpower to meet the demands of our expanding economy, in the context of liberalisation and globalization. Since Pandit Nehru's days, we have created a vast science and technology infrastructure which spans over several disciplines - from genetic engineering to nuclear science and from ocean development to space science. The Government has built up a vast network of research institutions, national laboratories, scientific institutes, universities and colleges. These institutions produce qualified professionals, but their number is small. It is in this context that the private sector agencies have to come forward and invest in the field of education, especially science education. This would go a long way in supplementing governmental efforts in the field of higher and specialised education. It would also make it possible for the government to concentrate on other major areas like elementary education, adult literacy, etc. These are the areas where the Government has to intervene and invest more resources to eradicate the menace of illiteracy and bring about a revolutionary change in the life of the people. Without a basic minimum level of education, we cannot think of bringing about any fundamental changes in the life of the people and society.

While it is essential that private agencies come forward in the field of higher education, one thing which we must keep in mind is that privatisation should not lead to the commercialization of education. While educational opportunities should be open to all, we should be specially considerate and compassionate to the economically and socially weaker sections of society.

That means education must be within the reach of all. Otherwise, it will benefit only a small section of society. It is the social obligation of educational institutions to help the disadvantaged sections as well.

Friends, yet another important aspect we should keep in mind is that the educational programmes we have in our colleges and institutions of higher learning must have some relevance to the requirements of society. It is an aspect often overlooked by the present day education system. Hence, it is essential that whatever is taught, it should be of some practical use not only to the students but also to the society in general. Only such kind of education where the students' potential is properly tuned to meet the requirements of the society and the nation has relevance today and also for all times to come.

In the end, I offer my best wishes to the young boys and girls who represent the future hope of India and to the members of the Managing Committee, the Principal and staff members of the college. I am sure that by constantly endeavouring to spread education, you will make a vital contribution which can turn India into a progressive and prosperous nation.

Thank you.

EDUCATION—A VITAL STEP IN LIFE*

It gives me immense pleasure to associate myself with the inauguration of the new building of Avanthi P.G. College. At the outset, I would like to thank the management and the Principal of this renowned college for having given me this opportunity to share my views with you.

I am glad to learn that ever since its inception, the Avanthi College has made rich contributions to the cause of education. It has gained reputation in maintaining a high degree of academic standards in teaching and promoting discipline among the students. Apart from academic achievements, the college has been excelling in sports and cultural and literary competitions held at inter-college and university levels. Courses like MCA and MBA started by the college have been able to generate professional acumen among the students which would help them in building their career and also quicken the process of modernisation. I am happy to know that a good number of students of the college have passed out their examinations with distinction.

Friends, education acts as a catalyst in the development of society, whether it is primary, secondary or higher education. Its contribution in the socio-economic and scientific development is undeniable. Education not only helps in developing the all-round personality of a man but also creates self-confidence in him thereby enabling him to take decisions in trying circumstances.

Education is not merely a preparation for life but it is a part of life itself. It helps every individual to realise his or her full potential. Education develops in us the faculties of critical analysis and understanding. It endows each individual with a deep sense of humanism, of reason, of tolerance and of discipline.

Needless to say, a great deal of responsibility for improvement in our education system rests on the teachers. Our society has always placed the

*At the inaugural function of the new building of the Avanthi P.G. College, Hyderabad (24 January 1999).

teacher at the highest pedestal. The teacher is supposed to teach more by his own example than by precept. The teachers must be dedicated towards the development of their pupils by identifying the hidden talents and encouraging them to sharpen their skills.

Friends, it goes without saying that education is one of the most important national activities. There cannot be any progress without it. It is an instrument for achieving an increase in productivity. Over the decades, the tremendous progress that India has made in industry and science and technology is praiseworthy. India has put satellites into space, achieved nuclear capabilities, and mastered the missile technology. But these are only partial successes. Education will be complete only when it inculcates moral values in the pupil and ennobles his heart and mind.

Today the concept of college is undergoing a sea change both in structure and performance. In order to establish direct links between education and national development and prosperity of the community, higher education must come closer to the needs and aspirations of the people and the goals of society. The significance of the role of colleges in the development of community needs no emphasis. We are now in need of more and more trained manpower and a larger number of scientists to meet the demands of expanding industry in the background of the liberalisation of our economy.

Friends, educational opportunities should be open to all and we should be considerate and compassionate to the economically and socially backward segments of society so that education can be within the reach of all. Otherwise it will benefit only a small section of society. It is the social obligation of educational institutions to help the disadvantaged sections of society.

The most important thing that should always be remembered is that the educational programmes and courses which we have in our colleges and institutions of higher learning should be in consonance with the changing needs of society—an aspect perhaps overlooked by the present day educational system. Hence, it is imperative that whatever is taught, it should be of some practical use not only to the students but also to the society in general. Only such kind of education where the potential of the students is properly tuned to meet the requirements of the society and the nation as a whole has a greater relevance in the present context.

Friends, I am happy to be associated with this function and on this occasion, I offer my warm greetings and good wishes to the teachers, the students, the management and all those who are associated with this college. I hope that this college will continue to fulfil its goal of academic excellence.

Thank you.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION – INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me great pleasure to be present here amidst you all at the unveiling of the statue of Sri Krishnadevaraya in the university campus. Shri G. Pulla Reddy, well-known industrialist and educationist of Kurmool, who has donated this statue deserves our thanks. It is most appropriate that this statue is being unveiled here in the university named after Sri Krishnadevaraya, one of the greatest emperors of India in the early 16th century. Sri Krishnadevaraya contributed significantly in diverse areas of public welfare such as civil and military administration, irrigation, agriculture, culture and literature and for these shining accomplishments, he was praised highly by many foreign travellers like Nuniz, Paes and others.

I am happy to note that since its inception in 1981, this university has carved out a niche for itself as one of the major centres of higher education in South India and is catering to the needs of the backward regions of Andhra Pradesh. The fact that it has 32 courses belonging to 25 departments and as many as 2500 students on its rolls goes to show that this university is doing well. Equally heartening is the fact that the students of this university are engaged in various social and cultural activities, which is, undoubtedly, the need of the hour.

Friends, the significance of education as a learning process which helps man to march forward in his quest for truth and excellence can hardly be over-emphasised. University education, as the term indicates, is concerned with higher learning. The university is a place of independent thinking, where young minds open up and evolve in an atmosphere of freedom amidst the intellectual clash of opinions and ideas. University education is not just an objective. It is also an instrument to reach the higher stages of human development. We ought to not only cherish and treasure knowledge, but also make good use of it.

*At the unveiling function of the statue of Sri Krishnadevaraya at the Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Ananthapur, Andhra Pradesh (2 November 1998).

It goes without saying that universities are not only centres for imparting knowledge but they also occupy a key position in the developmental strategy of nation. It is such centres of learning which can generate the intellectual and professional environment, so vitally important in a developing country like ours. A nation is moulded by its universities and centres of learning which impart training and seek to create among students a thirst for knowledge and a desire to extend the frontiers of knowledge through research and experiment. We can build a strong and progressive nation only with a good university education system. The university is not a place where formal education is imparted merely to enable the students to earn a living. It is rather a place where everyone strives for excellence; where young boys and girls are given such education as may liberate them from entrenched prejudices. True education is, indeed, a liberating force, cutting across narrow barriers of caste, creed, etc. which enables us to think rationally, logically and scientifically.

The purpose of education should not be confined to learning what is in the books alone. More importantly, it should build up an ability in students to judge issues critically and take decisions on them. The basic aim of education is to make us fit to face the complex challenges of life. Education makes us better citizens. Virtues like tolerance and discipline cannot be developed overnight; they are cultivated from an early age. It is only a good education system that can establish a healthy relationship between individuals and society. This relationship is mutual and complementary. The development of the individual enriches and improves the society, while a well-organised and sensitive society provides wider opportunities for the individual to grow. Education must necessarily inculcate right and humane qualities and values in the individual. Moreover, it should develop higher faculties and create a superior culture for better social order by shaping appropriate strategies for the adjustment of the individual in society.

The importance of education in the challenging task of nation-building is obvious. In our country, it should bring our ancient heritage to the new generation and reinforce our accepted values. It has to be a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values. In our pluralistic society, it should foster universal and eternal values oriented towards the unity and integration of our people.

I recall here what our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru once said:

A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for progress, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for onward march of the human race towards higher objectives. If the universities

discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people. But if the temple of learning itself becomes a home of narrow bigotry and petty objectives, how then will the nation progress or a person grow in stature?

Our system of education cannot be limited just to the mere acquisition of degrees. It must look at vocational training to bring in the skills relevant to daily life. Our system must be such that it should not push people into craving for white-collar employment. There is much in our education system which requires to be changed. It should have a practical orientation with emphasis on the development of skills in using theoretical knowledge for practical purposes. Educational programmes must be supported by practical training in farms and factories. Such arrangements will establish linkage between education and employing agencies to the benefit of both. Besides, the courses offered should be relevant to the needs of our people and help fulfil their hopes and aspirations.

It has become imperative for us to rise above narrow bigotry and petty objectives. National vision and national integration have been inherent in our culture and civilisation as they are indispensable for the progress of the country. The youth have inherited an India with all its gigantic problems and exciting opportunities and prospects. They can be part of the great and challenging task of uplifting millions of our people from poverty, disease, ignorance, and building a strong, united and progressive India.

I have great pleasure in unveiling the statue of Sri Krishnadevaraya and hope that the presence of his statue will serve as a source of inspiration and encouragement to all those who enter the portals of this temple of learning. Let us resolve to redouble our endeavours to build a nation of his dreams. This will be a fitting tribute to a great and multi-faceted emperor that Sri Krishnadevaraya was.

Thank you.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS*

It gives me immense pleasure to be here amidst you on the auspicious occasion of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Osmania Graduates' Association. This Association appears to be a unique kind of institution in the country. It has been rendering yeoman service to society right from its inception six decades ago in the vital spheres of education and economic development of the region covered by the Osmania University.

The Osmania University is one of the pioneering centres of learning in our State. Under the inspiring and intellectual guidance of a galaxy of Vice-Chancellors and erudite professors, the Osmania University has produced eminent men and women who have occupied positions of power and prestige, honour and authority in various fields. The Arts Faculty, the Law College and the Nizam College are some of the intellectual landmarks of the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The services this university rendered to the Telangana region are indeed praiseworthy.

Friends, we all know that alumni associations usually function as meeting grounds for former students to come together, revive nostalgic memories of their association with the Alma Mater, renew contact with old friends and there ends the matter. But, the Osmania Graduates' Association is engaged in the laudable task of undertaking various activities aimed at social development of the backward areas of the Telangana region. The Exhibition Society of the Osmania Graduates' Association has been doing commendable work in creating awareness on industrial development by holding the All India Industrial Exhibition annually which has become very popular over the years in giving a good exposition to entrepreneurs from across the country. This endeavour has made the Association financially stable to support social development activities like promoting education, especially the education of women.

*At the inauguration of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Osmania Graduates Association, Hyderabad (21 November 1998).

The progress of a society is measured by the place women occupy in that society. And the place a woman occupies in society is determined by the level of her education, employment and mobility. This is being slowly realised in our society and that is why the question of women's education is receiving special attention in recent times. The thirty per cent reservation provided by the Andhra Pradesh Government for women in educational institutions has added momentum to the cause. And the pioneering work done by the Osmania Graduates' Association to this cause is indeed laudable. Of the eight colleges run by the Association, two are exclusively for women with post-graduate facility.

Friends, we are all aware of the raging debate on the lamentably inadequate participation of women in our political processes. While this needs to be rectified, the institutional factors that have created this unfortunate situation have also to be tackled in earnest. And who can deny that lack of education is a major handicap that inhibits women's participation in public life? In this context, the endeavour of this Association deserves sincere applause from one and all. I heartily congratulate the Association on its achievements.

Friends, an alumni association running educational institutions of its own is undoubtedly a unique thing and when there are no less than eight colleges of which four are post-graduate centres, it is indeed a creditable achievement. No other alumni association has undertaken this kind of a project. It is said that of all charities, educational charity is the noblest as it enlightens the mind, broadens the horizon, illumines the vision and liberates the self from the darkness of ignorance, thereby heralding the dawn of awareness and opportunity, productivity and prosperity, knowledge and power.

I feel it a proud privilege to be invited to inaugurate the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of this Association. Earlier, as Minister for Higher Education, I had the privilege of inaugurating a Seminar of your Association on the role of private colleges in the promotion of higher education and participated in the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Sri Venkateswara College, Suryapet run under the aegis of this Association. I thank the organisers for the honour done to me and I wish the institution all the very best in its endeavours to grow in strength, stature and standing in society.

Thank you.

III

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

TERRORISM — THE SCOURGE OF OUR TIMES*

It gives me immense pleasure to be amidst a host of learned people from across the world. And it is my proud privilege to be invited to inaugurate this Conference on terrorism which is one of the most burning issues of our times. I am glad that the International Institute for Non-aligned Studies has taken the initiative to discuss this very vital question seriously. It is most appropriate that this Conference is taking place in the 50th Anniversary year of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) for, terrorism negates all that the UDHR stands for. As such, there is an urgency to confront this global threat of terrorism through concerted global action.

As we are on threshold of the next millennium, it is high time that we understood the nature and shape the menace of terrorism would acquire in the coming years. Therefore, this Conference has not come a day too soon. And I am sure the proceedings would give us new insights into the modes of this problem and the methods to tackle it in future.

Friends, terrorism is not a novel phenomenon, contrary to what some people think. The use of violence to terrorise and intimidate is an ancient tactic well-known to mankind. But as we progressed from the pre-historic state of nature to the modern Nation State, we have laid down civilized methods of conflict resolution and grievance redressal which a majority of mankind follows. And modern jurisprudence makes provision for deviant behaviour that breaks the law. There is the criminal justice system that takes care of the elements which breed violence. But terrorism is a different phenomenon altogether. It is so different that a proper definition is yet to come about among scholars involved in the study of the subject.

Terrorism has come to symbolise the scourge of modern civilization. While the menace of violence is known to man, terrorist violence has acquired a greater degree of sophistication, thanks to the advances made in science and

*At the inauguration of an International Conference on 'Terrorism : Threat to the 21st Century', New Delhi (11 December 1998).

technology. It is this sophistication in tactic that is paralysing the State and traumatizing the society by seeking to disrupt the life processes. There was a time when some countries lived in the fear of war for some time but now almost every country is exposed to the spectre of terrorist violence. The twentieth century has paid a heavy price when several Heads of State have fallen prey to terrorist violence. This has demonstrated that these acts of random violence can achieve effects that often produce overwhelming fear among the public, especially in democratic societies. For their part, governments tend to react by tightening security. One immediate result of this tactical violence has been the restriction of human rights and civil liberties. It also instils fear psychosis, insecurity complex and a sense of uncertainty among the public.

The face of terrorism is constantly changing even as it increases in scale and scope. The number of outfits have grown manifold and we have also seen the advent of suicidal squads and fanatical religious doctrines that extol the virtues of militancy and bloodbath. Over the years, terrorists have refined their planning and penetration, intelligence and infiltration. They have discovered new sources of funding through crime and the narcotics trade. They have gained access to a variety of sophisticated arms and explosives. This was the picture of terrorism till some years back. But today we are also confronted with state-sponsored terrorism.

Experts feel that state-sponsored terrorism is going to pose one of the greatest challenges to world peace. The horrifying aspect of this trend is that it has nearly replaced conventional warfare. A low intensity conflict is on in many countries, initiated by terrorist groups and supported by foreign governments, which is no less than a conventional war in its impact. Some countries have come to the misguided conclusion that the strength and stability of a nation depends on its ability to create conditions of instability in other countries. This is an unfortunate situation, but a fact.

The real danger is that terrorism may come to be seen as part of the armoury of States. Scholars have noticed terrorism emerging as a means of 'surrogate warfare' employed by nations against rivals. If this gains frequency, then we face the terrifying spectre of a spiral of terrorism, pre-emptive action, punishment raids and reprisal terrorism conducted by States with their vast resources. The potential consequences of this trend to international peace and stability are not hard to imagine.

It is possible that in future countries would start seeing terrorism as an inexpensive alternative to an actual war with obvious tactical advantages. If this trend gains momentum, then it is imperative to devote more time, energy and resources to the study of terrorism as a component of military strategy, so that appropriate military doctrine and counter measures may be developed to deal with the most menacing threat of our times.

The other point that must be discussed is the question of nuclearisation of terrorism. Would a time come when what is written in the *Fifth Horseman* and *Fourth Protocol* appear feasible? If that happens, what should be our response? Will they add any novel methods to the existing repertoire of bombings, assassinations, armed assaults, kidnappings, hijackings and embassy seizures which constitute the basic tactics of most terrorist incidents?

One alarming trend in recent times has been the growing number of incidents of large scale indiscriminate violence calculated to kill in quantity. Terrorists do not have any compunctions in attacking helpless people. As the menace has become commonplace, the public has also become desensitised to the threat, in some degree. This must be changed. Without people's involvement, the war on terrorism cannot be won. Terrorism affects the morale of the general public. Therefore, public debate about the problem and public awareness about security operations have to be a necessary feature of any meaningful response to terrorism.

Friends, in thinking about terrorism, we must carefully avoid certain traps which await the unwary. For example, the liberal assumption of virtue in the terrorist must be resisted at all costs, for whatever cause the terrorist espouses, he merits the term for his atrocities. On the other hand, we must equally resist the temptation to be so absorbed in the horror that we ignore the circumstances that give rise to it. Not all terrorism has its origins in social injustice but certainly where it does, the existence of terrorists should not prevent us from addressing those social problems within the constitutional parameters.

I hope all the intricate issues involved in the subject will come in for a detailed discussion during the course of this Conference as many experts have gathered here to deliberate and to develop a perspective for the future. I wish the Conference all success. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Conference.

Thank you.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN*

I am, indeed, very glad to inaugurate this Vocational Training Centre for women in Amalapuram. I hope this will play an important role in the uplift of women in the Konaseema region.

This is the age when the concept of empowerment of women is engaging everybody's attention. There is a saying "if you want me to tell you what a nation is like..... tell me the position of women in that country." But this talk is confined to the political sphere without providing an economic basis. In this context, vocational training for women assumes special significance. Women have a tremendous potential for hard work and a good deal of creative energy which are not properly channelised for want of opportunity. They are often tied down, by the force of tradition and superstition, to dead-end jobs and domestic chores which give them neither remuneration nor recognition. Therefore, imparting vocational training to women is an important step in the process of empowering the neglected half of mankind. It gives them not only the skills to exploit their hidden potential but also instils in them a sense of courage and confidence to do things outside the realm of home. This has both economic and social implications for the family and society.

Today, the life expectations are going up, thanks to the wide reach of the electronic media to every nook and corner. However, this is not accompanied by an increase in the purchasing power of the people and expectations remain unfulfilled with single income. Unless man's income is supplemented by woman's income, it is difficult to acquire even the basic amenities of modern living like health care, children's education and to provide for the welfare of the old.

We are an agrarian economy and, therefore, a majority of the people are engaged in agricultural work. But agriculture offers only seasonal employment and it also has the element of disguised unemployment. Vocational training

*At the function to inaugurate a Vocational Training Centre for Women, Amalapuram, Andhra Pradesh (6 May 1998).

to women can solve this twin problem with one shot, as it were. There are many areas in which vocational training can be imparted to make women stand on their own legs in the world of work without disrupting the rhyme of home. The lace work industry of Narasapur just across the river is a classic example of engaging the creative energy of women for gainful employment without taking them away from home.

The advancement of women has broken down many traditional male bastions, including the Armed Forces which for long years remained the last post of male monopoly, but not any more. The Kiran Bedis, Karanam Malleswaris and Kalpana Chawlas are the new deities of women power. But women power, to be sustained in the long run, requires a strong economic foundation at the grassroot level and vocational training offers just this. There are many areas in which skills can be imparted to women for gainful employment and economic independence. Tailoring, TV mechanism, dairy farming, poultry farming, bee-keeping, sericulture, food packing and marketing, etc. are some of the areas that come to one's mind immediately.

Vocational training, traditionally, has this paradox that while it imparts hitherto unknown skills, it also instils the hindering factor. We must get rid of notions like 'this is a man's job' and 'that is a woman's job'. This barrier is often artificial. We now have lady conductors in RTC buses. Soon they may be in the driver's seat as well. And why not? But who could think of this even five years before?

The idea of women taking up remunerative occupations outside the home does not merely make economic sense but carries seeds of social change. It breaks the age-old myth that women are 'kitchen queens'. It gives them a sense of confidence to stand boldly on their own in the big world. It gives them an identity, and the courage to assert their rightful place in the family and in society.

Gainful employment of women has another salutary effect on society and that is the effective implementation of family planning. It is commonly known that women engaged in gainful activity are less prone to pregnancy than others for, they know better the costs involved in child bearing and child rearing and so they may not have more than one or two issues. This naturally ensures a smaller family and a better family wherein the basic necessities are easily provided for with two incomes supplementing each other.

Women engaged in remunerative occupations can transform their homes into little heavens. Husbands the world over tend to respect earning wives

than housewives. Earning wives are better placed in ensuring good conduct and responsible behaviour of husbands—free from harmful habits. Women not earning on their own are not in a psychologically strong position to influence the husband and the family due to the hidden feeling that they are mere housewives depending on the mercy of men for bread and butter. Economic independence ensures emancipation from such complexes and makes gender relations more equal.

However, I must add a word of caution before I conclude. Vocational training centres for women must act as agents of socio-economic change without undermining the importance of family and the significance of home. These centres are not breeding grounds of feminism but should act as important links in the empowerment of women for the wider good of society as a whole. The stability of our society lies in the strength of family as an institution and we must do everything to further strengthen it. It is vital that the training of women begin right from the family unit, because society is built on the basis of family. Mothers must be taught that both girls and boys are equal. No preferential treatment should be given to any of them so that they all can go to school without discrimination.

I hope this Vocational Training Centre would be successful enough to inspire the setting up of many such centres in other towns and villages of Konaseema area. I wish this Centre all success in its endeavours and promise my cooperation in all possible ways.

Thank you.

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me great pleasure to be here amidst you and I am happy to inaugurate *Jana Chetana*—a voluntary organisation committed to the cause of women's development. I hope the programmes of this organisation in rural reconstruction will go a long way to motivate the young and women to play a proactive role to accelerate the pace of development.

We are a developing society and the State naturally plays a pivotal role in the developmental process. But, our country is very vast with problems galore in many spheres of public life. In order to overcome these problems and achieve a measure of growth, the State alone cannot perform the task of bringing about socio-economic change. It is here that the role of voluntary agencies assumes special significance in stimulating a socio-economic rejuvenation.

The NGOs have a great role to play in encouraging the involvement of people in accelerating developmental processes. We must realise that development is not a miracle coming from the heavens. It is the result of hard work coupled with an intelligent use of resources—both human and natural. In other words, it is a movement of the people, by the people and for the people to change the shape of society through a spirit of self-help and collective endeavour. The need of the hour, therefore, is to encourage individual initiative and foster community consciousness for social good. In this context, we must focus our attention on the youth who are a reservoir of creative energy. There is a great potential hidden in the youth force of our country which needs to be channelised in the right direction for positive results. To tap this vital source, our youth need to be given a proper orientation of the wonders that can be achieved through collective and concerted action involving the people. This is an area where the voluntary agencies are already rendering yeoman's

*At the inauguration of *Jana Chetna*, a voluntary organisation, Kakinada (6 March 1999)

services to our society. They are better suited to play this catalyst role to transform the latent energy of our youth into a productive force and a constructive power because they function in an informal ambience with which people can easily relate and involve themselves.

Our society is plagued with many problems in every given sphere of life. We are confronted with hardships like poverty and privation, illiteracy and unemployment, disease and despair. All these factors have contributed to the economic backwardness which weakens the social fabric. Therefore, there is a great need to rejuvenate the youth and women in order to overcome our economic evils and social weaknesses and transform the country into a strong and united India as dreamt by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and other leaders of our historic but non-violent fight for freedom. In this context, we must realise the imperative to involve women actively in the developmental processes. They do as much work as men, if not more, in every sphere and yet when it comes to donning leadership roles, they are relegated to a secondary position. This is most unfortunate which must be changed. No society can achieve development if women do not play an active role. Western societies have been able to progress so rapidly because women joined the productive work force on equal terms with men. This is the lesson we must learn from the West: let women play their due role.

Mahatma Gandhi once remarked that the heart beat of India lies in its villages where a vast majority of our countrymen live. Therefore, we need to make the village a comfortable and secure place to live in, which it once was. Unless we reform the village and improve rural life, we cannot stop urban migration. And unless we stop urban migration, life in the towns and cities cannot be improved. Today, our towns are facing too much of a pressure on the limited civic amenities because of migration. That means we need to do a great deal in the spheres of population control, environmental protection, poverty alleviation, the eradication of illiteracy, improvement in public health and rural sanitation, development of agriculture, generation of employment opportunities, etc. These are also the areas in which the Government is already involved heavily. But that is not enough. The governmental effort must be supplemented by the people's voluntary endeavours in the developmental process. This calls for social education on the need for people's involvement.

And unless and until we ensure the involvement of people, especially women, we cannot find lasting solutions to pressing problems. But, one of the major hindrances to ensure people's involvement is the social inertia. It is this factor that is the root cause behind many of our country's evils. Inertia breeds apathy and apathy leads to insensitivity. This is what we have to overcome today. We must develop the spirit of enterprise and adventure. We

must develop our resolve to face the harsh realities of life with courage, confidence and conviction. This realisation must come from our inner strength voluntarily and not by compulsion. Development is the concern of every individual. That means each one of us must realise our responsibility.

It is here that voluntary agencies play a major part to motivate our youth and women with drive and dynamism, enterprise and initiative to build a brave new India where no eye would shed a tear for want of the basic necessities of life. This means the youth must assume positions of the leadership to lead the society on to the path of progress, prosperity and stability. Today, what the *Jana Chetana* intends to do is to provide leadership training and guidance to women's groups and youth to advance the cause of rural reconstruction.

I want this organisation to be a huge success in inspiring the youth who must play a lead role in the task of nation building. Our district is rich in natural resources. We need to harness these resources to create social assets for the larger benefit of the community by involving the people in management. This calls for training in social leadership, education in social engineering and motivation in moulding traditional attitudes.

This is a job the NGOs are ideally suited to perform as they work among the people and speak the people's idiom. You must learn the cardinal principle that self-help is the best help and God helps those who help themselves. This is the message you must carry to our brothers and sisters back home in the villages. I wish *Jana Chetana* and you all the best in your endeavours.

Thank you.

NGOs AND SOCIAL WELFARE*

It gives me great pleasure to be with you all on this happy occasion of the First Anniversary of the Tirupati City Chamber, a budding organisation dedicated to the service of humanity. May I take this opportunity to congratulate all those who have planned and established the Chamber in this Temple City and also those who are in its service. Indeed, there is no greater happiness than to be guided by good—whether it be a good idea, good deed or good word.

This City Chamber came into existence only a year ago. It is a matter of utmost satisfaction that its manifold activities aimed at achieving the laudable goal of social welfare have made it a popular institution in the city. It is highly commendable that true to its spirit, the voluntary service rendered by the City Chamber in the Abode of Lord Venkateswara has reached as many as over a lakh ailing people who were desperately in need of medical help. The organisation has done a commendable work by arranging free medical camps from time to time. Innovative programmes like bringing the elected representatives and Government officials face to face with people have been widely acclaimed. The City Chamber deserves to be complimented for organising blood donation awareness programmes, cultural programmes and events specially meant for children and senior citizens. Indeed, I am really happy to learn that you have organised 50 programmes in 50 weeks to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of our Independence.

Friends, in this era of the Welfare State, Governments do take responsibility for the well-being of their citizens. They formulate policies and programmes and devise ways to implement them. In spite of all this, we still come across situations where the impact of welfare programmes is not visible. So, the endeavours made by voluntary organisations to fill these gaps must be appreciated and supported by one and all. Voluntary organisations play an

*At the First Anniversary Celebration of the Tirupati City Chamber, Andhra Pradesh (24 July 1998).

active role as important agents in supplementing the governmental endeavours. Indeed, community participation in pursuing projects meant for creating public awareness needs all encouragement.

Friends, nothing is more praiseworthy and satisfying than social service in the sphere of education. This is one critical area where the youth of the day need to get involved earnestly for achieving results in the onerous task of nation-building. The active and continued involvement of the youth in such work during their spare time is bound to generate a deep sense of respect for them. These efforts would eventually help in developing human resource for the good of the society at large. Simultaneously, we shall be channelising the youth power and potential in the right direction for constructive purposes.

Before I conclude, I would like to congratulate you all once again on the excellent work done during the last one year. I am confident that you will continue to be guided by noble principles in the conduct of the affairs of the Tirupati City Chamber. I wish you all success in your arduous work in the service of humanity.

Thank you.

THE ROTARY MOVEMENT IN SOCIAL SERVICE*

It is, indeed, a matter of great pleasure for me to be here at the function organised by All Konaseema Rotary Clubs, Razole to felicitate me. I feel overwhelmed by the warmth of affection and the nice words said about me. It would be my earnest endeavour to live upto your expectations and fulfil the responsibilities bestowed upon me by destiny.

It is a well-known fact that the Konaseema region, enriched as it is with fertile land, holds great potential for diversified farming activities covering annual and perennial crops. The long stretch of land surrounded by coconut groves and extended sea shore has captivated many a heart for long. The major sorrow of the land, however, has been the nature's wrath and fury which visit the region off and on. Devastating floods and cyclones have engulfed it periodically, ravaging the lives and properties, including the livestock.

It is heartening to know that during such calamities and times of distress, the Rotary Clubs of the Konaseema region have come forward and rendered yeoman service by providing all kinds of help and relief to those who were in need. This selfless service to mankind is indeed praiseworthy.

Friends, India has had a great tradition of philanthropic activity, social service and voluntary work. Apart from the instinct of charity inherent in the individual as a kind of *dharma* (duty) in Indian philosophy and culture dating back to ancient times, a large number of charitable and voluntary institutions have emerged in India to help the poor, the destitute, the downtrodden, the handicapped and other weaker sections of society.

Voluntarism in India, since Independence, has moved in different directions due to the changing milieu. Embodying the spirit of voluntarism inherited from a long tradition, the NGOs have successfully created their

*At the felicitation function held in his honour by All Konaseema Rotary Clubs, Razole, East Godavari Dist. (11 July 1998).

own niche. There is no denying the fact that the NGOs have contributed substantially to many worthwhile causes. With varying strategies and objectives, they have secured a prominent position in the developmental scenario of our country today.

The work of the Rotary Movement is a reflection of the advancement of modern civilisation towards promoting fraternity and co-operation among different peoples the world over. The motivating force behind this movement being "Service through Fellowship", many social welfare activities such as disaster relief and health care of the poor have been taken up by Rotary Clubs internationally. Rotarians are committed to strive for ideals like creating order where there is chaos, fellowship where there is loneliness and health and happiness where there is poverty and disease. "Service above the Self" is the thread that runs throughout the Rotary world and it unites like-minded men in thought and action, no matter in what part of the world they live in. I understand that there are about 28,000 Rotary Clubs spread across 159 countries, with a membership totalling around 12 lakh. The potential for good deeds emanating from such a movement is immense, by any imagination. And, it is a matter of great satisfaction that the Rotary Movement is engaged in onerous tasks which conform to that outstanding potential.

It is a matter of gratification that the All Konaseema Rotary Clubs have also been trying to bring in a friendly, non-partisan atmosphere by binding men of all castes, religious faiths, political beliefs and professional backgrounds under one umbrella. Its endeavour has always been to cultivate fellowship towards the common end of service while avoiding partisan attitudes and activities on which men are so often divided.

I understand that the Clubs have always remained in the forefront of community service and are playing a commendable role by providing food, shelter and medical aid to those who are in need during times of distress. The joy brought to the underprivileged and handicapped by the humanitarian services undertaken by the Clubs cannot but create a feeling of pride for their members. Needless to say, those activities are highly commendable for they serve humanity and contribute towards creating a feeling of fellowship and brotherhood in society.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the organisers for the felicitation and wish them all success in their future endeavours.

Thank you.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me great pleasure to associate myself with this annual Christian convention under the leadership of Dr. James Scudder and Dr. Swatantra Kumar. I understand that Dr. Kumar has been working in Rajahmundry as a spirited missionary for a considerable time. He has provided yeoman service to the people of this region in various ways. The missionary works are sponsored by Dr. James Scudder who is a respected religious leader and social worker in the United States. Dr. Scudder has shown special affection for the people of this region by launching his activities here. It is obvious that he is deeply motivated in the true Christian spirit to help the needy people in all possible ways. Through his presence here and the interaction between his team and the people, he has established a life-long rapport with the local people. These exchanges help fill our minds with goodwill, brotherhood and divine thoughts. I understand that Dr. James Scudder is a descendant of late Dr. Idah Scudder, founder of the Christian Medical College at Vellore which is a premier institution in medical education and advanced health care in the country.

For his part, Dr. Kumar has painstakingly laid the foundation for a network of missionary and charitable works in and around Rajahmundry. He has started a school, orphanage and clinic and is implementing various other welfare schemes. His work among the jail inmates is particularly laudable as such people are often ostracised by society. I wish all success to Dr. Kumar's attempts to transform them into reformed human beings and help them lead a worthy life.

Friends, we all know that there is only one Supreme Power. An essential amity and unity of humankind, irrespective of different races, religions, castes, languages, and nationalities, is present in our world. Most countries today are multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural due to migration and other historical factors. In the place of predominantly monolithic concepts of

*At the Annual Christian Meeting, Rajahmundry (14 February 1999).

earlier days, we are now witnessing plural societies and the co-mingling of people of different religions, views, ideologies and other diversities. In this context, we must re-emphasise our traditions and values and endeavour to build a healthy understanding and harmony among people of different religious denominations.

Since time immemorial, religions have existed in one form or the other. They all teach people to lead a good life based on certain values and our underlying submission to God Almighty. Any deviation from this role of religious needs to be checked. Today, we live in a world engaged in a rat-race for acquiring wealth, position, fame and material pleasures. Our desire for material advancement needs to be balanced, lest we should end up destroying the individuals, family and society. Purity of thought and action has to be inculcated firmly in our minds by encouraging people to tread on the righteous path laid by all religious systems. Only religion can help the ever-increasing number of frustrated and aimless people in the post-modernist era to find their moorings and happiness in life. By imbibing noble religious principles and ethos, people can help themselves to secure inner peace and rejuvenate their minds and lead fruitful lives. All our religious leaders should pursue this basic goal of reforming people and rejuvenating their spiritual and moral foundations.

Religions have, no doubt, some responsibilities towards temporal matters. Poverty and extreme backwardness demean human life and hinder people from realising fullness in life. In India, about 38 per cent of people are living below the poverty line and the largest concentration of illiterates is in our country. We have to make sustained efforts to improve the lot of the depressed and the downtrodden who constitute a majority of the illiterate masses. The country needs many more primary, secondary and high schools to provide elementary education to all. For a large per cent of Indian population, achieving an adequate level of socio-economic progress is still a distant dream. Since the State has only limited resources and is also facing other constraints, we need to involve voluntary agencies, including religious institutions, to shoulder our gigantic developmental tasks.

It is commendable that Christian institutions have long been dedicated to accelerate the developmental processes in our country, especially in the fields of education and health. Through the dedicated work of many selfless missionaries, it has been possible to reach out to the most underprivileged, the most marginalised and the weakest and bring them on to the road to progress and prosperity. It is well to remember what Jesus Christ said, "I was sick; and you visited me". Let us show the same compassion to everybody who is suffering and is in need of help. And the care and concern which

people like Dr. Kumar and Dr. Scudder show towards our brethren must be praised by all of us.

I thank you for giving me an opportunity to share the joy of this spiritually renewing occasion. I am sure that all those who attended the convention have gained spiritually and otherwise and find themselves further enlightened.

I wish Dr. Kumar and Dr. Scudder all success in their endeavours. Let the Christian philosophy lighten our life and lead us towards peace, harmony and love.

Thank you.

DOCTORS AND HEALTH CARE*

It gives me immense pleasure to be associated with the inaugural function of the 74th All India Annual Conference of the Indian Medical Association. At the outset, I would like to thank the organisers of the Conference for inviting me and providing me with an opportunity to share my views with you.

I am happy to know that the Indian Medical Association, which is a premier body of eminent medical practitioners of our country, with a membership of 1.25 lakh doctors and 1,800 branches across the country, is hosting this Conference. On this occasion, I extend my heartiest congratulations to the Chairman and other members of the Organising Committee of the Conference, the doctors and all others belonging to the fraternity of IMA.

Over the years the IMA, in association with the Union as well as the State Governments, has been playing a significant role in providing health services and also spreading health awareness among our people. IMA's active involvement in various health care programmes like Malaria Eradication, Pulse Polio, and Tuberculosis Control, etc. is indeed, laudable. I am sure that the IMA will continue to do good work in achieving the goal of 'Health for All by 2000 AD'.

Friends, good health of the people is not only a desirable goal but also an essential investment in human resource development. During the last five decades, we have made tremendous progress in the field of health. While the mortality rate has declined from 27.4 per 1,000 population in 1947 to 8.9 in 1996, life expectancy has risen from a mere 32 years in 1947 to about 62 years currently. These are no mean achievements.

With the growing population and urbanisation, health related problems are witnessing a sharp increase in our country. The health services

*At the inaugural function of the 74th All India Annual Conference of the Indian Medical Association, Hyderabad (28 December 1998).

infrastructure, therefore, should be made strong enough to cater to the needs of a large number of our people. At the same time, it is imperative to improve the efficiency of existing health care infrastructure at primary, secondary and tertiary levels so that health services are accessible to the people, especially the vulnerable sections of society.

At the grassroot level, the local institutions like the Panchayat and the Nagarpalika can play an important role in the planning, implementation and monitoring of health and family welfare services. Besides, they can ensure effective coordination of various programmes at the local level between related areas such as sanitation, safe drinking water and women and child development. The institutions at the local level may create awareness among the people and help them in deriving optimum benefits from health programmes.

Friends, the secondary health care infrastructure operating at the city and district levels would help in reducing the burden on the tertiary care hospitals, besides providing a credible and effective linkage with primary health care institutions. I am happy to note that Andhra Pradesh is among the few States which have initiated Secondary Health Care System Development Projects with a focus on strengthening the District Hospitals and services. This may give further impetus in providing timely health services to the people.

Needless to say, the impact of any health programme depends on the competence and skills of the personnel who implement it. In the medical profession, continuous updating of skills and knowledge is essential for providing effective and efficient health care services. In India, it has been observed that there are regional disparities both in quantity and quality of available health care professionals. During the Ninth Five-Year Plan, a major programme of multi-professional and inter-professional education is proposed to be launched for training the members of health care delivery teams, so as to enable them to accomplish group tasks in providing health care to the community. At the national and State levels, there will be training of the trainers in latest technologies and national programmes on emerging diseases and their management. As a result, the knowledge and skills of our professionals will be updated continuously which will enable them to combat these diseases effectively.

In the wake of industrial development, rapid urbanisation, changing agricultural practices and deforestation, many diseases are staging a comeback. Many microbes with their mutants are spreading and developing resistance to drugs. New diseases are also cropping up and affecting the health of

millions of people. There is a need to evolve surveillance mechanism to identify such diseases. Since people have a right to good health, accountability in this regard must be given top priority for the sake of quality of life and prosperity of the people. However, the problems of poverty, illiteracy, poor sanitation, malnutrition, scarcity of safe drinking water and a growing population complicate the health scenario and make the task of health care a difficult one. Achieving the goal of 'Health for All' in the near future would, therefore, depend largely on the alleviation of poverty, raising living standards of the people and eradication of various diseases.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the 74th All India Annual Conference of the Indian Medical Association. I wish its deliberations all success.

Thank you.

HEALTH FOR ALL — NEED FOR CONCERTED ACTION*

I am happy to be amidst you at the inauguration of the New Ultrasound Aloka Flexus Machine at the United Scanning and Endoscopic Centre. May I take this opportunity to thank the organisers for having invited me here.

We all are aware of the fact that ultrasound which is one of the newest methods of examining the human body has gained wide acceptance in medical circles because of its two main advantages: ability to make findings that X-ray cannot, and apparent safety. It is a very useful device and causes no harm to the patient. It can scan even the minute parts of the human body which cannot be done by the X-ray. The utility of ultrasound equipment is obvious from the fact that it is widely used in the process of diagnosing the human anatomy. For example, it can diagnose pregnancy as early as five weeks and can determine the age of gestation with such accuracy as was previously unthinkable.

Friends, we have a long way to go before we could achieve the goal of "Health for All by 2000 AD". It requires a determined effort and for this voluntary organisations need to pay an important role in supplementing the efforts of the Government.

In achieving health for all emphasis has to be placed on community health and primary health. These are the basic requirements for achieving the goal of health for all. Primary health care cannot become a reality unless we have hospitals, equipped with the basic facilities for diagnosis and treatment. In this context, I would like to call upon doctors to strive for the care of the sick and diseased with commitment and compassion. The two complement each other. Without commitment the care provided will not help to restore health to the sick. Similarly, without compassion and understanding, care will not be meaningful.

*At the function to inaugurate Ultrasound Aloka Flexus Machine, Amalapuram (8 August 1998).

A doctor is the keystone of a good health service. It is no use pretending that we can build an enduring health service without firm commitment and involvement of the medical profession. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that the objectives of medical education should be so designed and the medical curriculum so structured that doctors would fulfil the basic health needs of a developing society like ours. Besides we should devise a balanced policy for the training of specialists, general practitioners and nurses, so that they all function together as a team with an efficient referral system.

In a country like ours, where resources are extremely limited, it is important to ensure that funds are properly utilised in developing institutions which have all the facilities necessary for research, training, diagnosis and treatment. Since the Government's resources and services are stretched to the full, they need to be supplemented by the voluntary efforts of public spirited doctors and citizens.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the ultrasound medical equipment.

Thank you.

EMERGENCY MEDICINE – VITAL ASPECT OF HEALTH CARE*

I am happy to be here amidst a galaxy of distinguished doctors and it is indeed a matter of privilege for me to be the Guest of Honour at this first Conference of the Indian Society for Emergency Medicine being held under the aegis of the Asian Society for Emergency Medicine.

Friends, medicine, as a life saving discipline, is becoming increasingly sophisticated by making a fruitful use of all the latest advances in science and technology. And the latest aspect of this sophistication is perhaps the concept of emergency medicine. In the context of developing societies, I think emergency medicine is more an attitude of mind than a specialised discipline of knowledge as it deals with every ailment of an emergency nature. The development of this aspect of medicine reflects on the development of medicare as a whole.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the West emergency medicine is a well established field while in the developing societies like India it is slowly coming up. But, there is a pertinent need to pay greater attention to this aspect in the coming days as diseases leading to emergency situations are on the rise, more in the developing countries because of the low level of availability of basic health care facilities to a vast majority of the people. In our country a lot of people do not go for a medical check up even when it is necessary, not to speak of a general check up which in any case is unknown to a majority of the people. Because of the low level of awareness about health care, diseases like diabetes, cardiac problems, etc. are on the rise. With the pollution level reaching alarming heights in our cities, respiratory problems are also on the rise.

With the ever increasing vehicular traffic on our roads, accidents too are on the rise in our cities in a big way. There are also cases of trauma coming from the social sector leading to emergency situations. This aspect becomes

*At the inauguration of the first Conference of the Indian Society for Emergency Medicine, Hyderabad (8 May 1999).

more pronounced as society grapples with socio-economic changes which sometimes produce individual stress and social strain. All this shows the need to develop a perspective on emergency medicine by highlighting the various issues involved in it.

Emergency medicine is a concept that involves the society as a whole and not merely the medical community. I say this because what happens before the patient reaches the hospital has a vital bearing on what happens after the patient reaches the hospital. That is why it is so necessary to enhance public awareness on the significance of emergency medicine. Often, public apathy is a hindrance in providing timely medical aid to those who are in critical need of it. Therefore, public spiritedness must be encouraged and doctors have a great responsibility in this context. A doctor is not only a curer of diseases but also a medical teacher to society. He has to teach the public basic issues about first aid, etc., in critical cases like a heart attack.

There is another aspect of public education. The public must be made to shed its inhibitions and hesitations in reaching out to those who are in need of help. We find that accident victims are not attended to by those who are around for fear of facing unnecessary questions or avoidable expenses. Therefore, public education is necessary to create public spiritedness and in this the medical fraternity has to play a crucial role. In other words, public education about medicine as well as morality need to be emphasised in this context.

Then, the doctors also must realise the importance of promptness as a vital element in emergency medicine. Sometimes, we find indifference on the part of doctors while attending to emergency cases. A doctor should never lose his sensitivity to pain and suffering even though it is a routine matter to him. There must be promptness on the part of the medical staff. In emergency cases what matters is the rapidity of diagnosis and rapidity of treatment because any delay can cost human life which may otherwise be saved. In this context, resource crunch is admittedly a major problem as most hospitals in our country do not have the necessary equipment. We may be able to overcome this problem if some hospitals specialise in certain aspects of emergency medicine. This calls for coordination among the hospitals and the doctors must also overcome the medico-legal syndrome in dealing with emergency cases. Trauma cases are often refused by private hospitals because of the legal formalities involved and by the time the patient is taken to a government hospital, the situation results in 'brought dead'.

There is one more aspect which must be highlighted and that is affordability. Emergency medicine must be made affordable. While many

government hospitals are not well-equipped, private hospitals are inaccessible because of the high charges. In a developing country like India where the idea of health security is largely unknown and health insurance is still a vague concept, people will not be able to make use of private hospital facilities if the charges are prohibitively expensive. How to make the service accessible to the common man is a question that must be debated here. I hope you will pay adequate attention to this question in the course of the deliberations.

Medical profession has a sanctity very unique to itself. If God creates life, it is the doctor who protects it and prolongs it. That is why a doctor is treated next to God by mankind. That is the unique thing about your profession. Here, success is measured by the ability to save a life than by the amount of money earned. No doubt, money is important but life is far more important. Therefore, corporate hospitals and private practitioners must adopt a humanitarian attitude towards the poorer sections of society in the context of emergency medicine.

Friends, what I have spoken here is from the common man's perception. As experts you are all aware of the intricate details of your specialities but the common man's perception must not be overlooked. Ultimately, he is at the receiving end and therefore his view must also count. And I have given expression to that view. I am glad for the opportunity to share my views with you.

I am sure this Conference will discuss in depth the various issues involved in emergency medicine and develop a perspective which can become useful in improving medical facilities in the country. I hope you will discuss issues like the need for rapid transportation, trained staff, public involvement, etc. apart from specialised subjects of academic nature.

I wish the Indian Society of Emergency Medicine the very best in all its endeavours. And I wish this first ever Conference on Emergency Medicine in India every success.

Thank you.

POLIO REHABILITATION — A RAY OF HOPE*

I am, indeed, happy to be here amidst you to share your happiness at the anniversary celebrations of PREMA Hospital. And I deem it a great privilege to be invited as the Distinguished Guest of Honour by an institution of great distinction and a hospital of rare reputation to join the festivities of its anniversary celebration. I thank Dr. Adinarayana Rao for the honour done to me.

Friends, we are all aware that polio is one of the most dreaded ailments of our times. It leaves the victim handicapped for the rest of his life. While other diseases lead to death through deterioration or bring back life through amelioration of the patient's condition, polio is a different case altogether. Once it comes, it remains an affliction making the victim crippled almost permanently. It is a difficult existence and life is a daily torture from which there is no known relief or rehabilitation.

Mercifully, however, that has been no more so, since Dr. Vyaghreswarudu, a visionary doctor, started the movement of free polio corrective surgeries in 1976. This doyen of polio surgery conducted a series of camps providing a great ray of hope and a fresh lease of life to the polio affected persons. Jonas Salk's vaccine led to the prevention of polio by immunisation and the discovery of this vaccine was a significant event in the history of medical research which saved mankind from this dreaded affliction. No less significant is the endeavour of Dr. Vyaghreswarudu and Dr. Adinarayana in the context of post-polio paralysis.

'Prevention is better than cure' is an age old saying. While prevention of diseases is an ideal, what about those who are afflicted with an ailment and are suffering for want of curative measures? In the context of polio, we are resigned to the fate of a crippled life and hardly any curative measures are contemplated even by the medical fraternity. Consequently, we think of only social rehabilitation in terms of providing a hand-driven tricycle, etc.

*At the Anniversary of PREMA Hospital, Visakhapatnam (20 June 1999).

It is in this context that we have to see the significance of the role played by the PREMA hospital. It stands out as an institution of distinction for the yeoman's service rendered in terms of medical, surgical and therapeutical management for the rehabilitation of polio persons. A full-fledged hospital geared to rehabilitate polio victims into the mainstream of life has, in fact, been the long cherished dream of Dr. Vyaghreswarudu who pioneered the concept of medical rehabilitation of polio persons. The very expression of 'polio persons' which they use in their brochures reveals their enlightened approach to the problem. The first step in polio rehabilitation is to dispel the complex from the patient's mind. Victims they, indeed, are unfortunate. But, if they are trapped into a cobweb of self-pity at their misfortune, rehabilitation becomes that much more difficult. We should be able to fight diseases mentally and medically. Unless one shows the will to fight, any amount of medicine will be of no avail. On the contrary, mere will, however strong it be, unaccompanied by proper treatment will also be of no use. There are no miracles to cure our ailments and to relieve us from afflictions. We have to fight our difficulties with our own strength of character and courage of conviction.

It is precisely this spirit of dynamism that led Dr. Adinarayana Rao to establish the Free Polio Surgical and Research Foundation which is managing the PREMA hospital services. It is, in fact, not just a hospital but a temple of hope, if we look at the spirit behind the mission. The poor are provided free treatment here and the rich are charged only for the costly items such as bandages, etc. This is a befitting tribute paid to the memory of Dr. Vyaghreswarudu by his dedicated disciple Dr. Adinarayana Rao.

In fact, Dr. Adinarayana Rao has taken the concept of charitable health care a step further by going to the door-steps of the patients, if the patients are not in a position to come to the doors of PREMA hospital. The number of camps held all over India and especially in Andhra Pradesh shows the firm commitment to a cause dear to Dr. Vyaghreswarudu in whose foot steps Dr. Adinarayana Rao is steering the course of this Foundation.

I am sure this Hospital will grow in strength and stature to become a prominent institution of national fame in pioneering the procedures for polio rehabilitation. That will offer a new lease of life to the lakhs of polio persons in our country. I wish all success for the future endeavours of the management and staff of PREMA hospital to serve the cause of polio persons.

Thank you.

CORPORATE HOSPITALS AND SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS*

First of all, I would like to thank Dr. C. Dayakar Reddy, Chairman of the CDR Hospitals, for inviting me on the occasion of the inaugural function of the Sanjeevani Helicopter Service. I am sure this unique service will play an important role in extending medical and health care services to the poor and needy patients in remote areas.

Friends, it gives me immense pleasure to associate myself with the inaugural ceremony of the CDR Hospitals' Sanjeevani Helicopter Service to be operated from Hyderabad. Its first destination will be Jangaon, Warangal. 'Sanjeevani', a concept based on the mythological story associated with Lord Hanuman in our great epic *Ramayana*, is the brainchild of Dr. Dayakar Reddy who himself is a medical practitioner of repute. The main objective of this service is to provide the needy patients access to free and subsidised medical treatment at their door steps, especially for major surgical problems. I am happy to know that for this purpose, the CDR Medical Foundation, a charitable organisation, is being established. I am told that intellectuals, philanthropists, social workers, besides eminent personalities from various walks of life are associated with this Foundation.

Needless to say, the CDR Hospitals have been growing in numbers constantly and consistently over the years. They have been keeping pace with the state-of-the-art medical technology to upgrade the skills of their doctors and professionals in various fields. These Hospitals are known for their qualitative medical and health care services. The CDR fraternity, consisting of thousands of dedicated doctors, para-medical and administrative staff is always ready to help and treat their patients with a warm and caring attitude which is, indeed, the *sine qua non* of this great and noble profession.

Friends, in a vast country like India, we are faced with multifarious problems like rapid population growth, poverty, unemployment, poor health

*At the inauguration of Sanjeevani Helicopter Service of the CDR Hospitals, Hyderabad (2 October 1998).

care services, etc. Health care is one such major problem which needs to be tackled on a war-footing. Although our Governments over the decades have been doing their best by allocating huge amounts in our plans and programmes for this priority area, a lot more is required to be done. In order to achieve the objective of health for all, it is imperative that the private sector, NGOs and charitable organisations play a more active and constructive role.

It is indeed a matter of great happiness that under the able and dynamic leadership of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh has been making tremendous progress and achieving new heights in various fields. I am sure this would lead our State to greater prosperity in the new millennium.

With these words, I am happy to inaugurate the CDR Hospitals' Sanjeevani Helicopter Service which will go a long way in providing medical services to the poor and the needy patients not only in Andhra Pradesh but also in other States like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka as the specialists will visit patients at their places and treat them. I congratulate Dr. Dayakar Reddy and his team of devoted colleagues on this auspicious occasion. I wish them all success in their endeavour.

Thank you.

AIDS CONTROL — THE NEED FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS*

It gives me great pleasure to be here amidst you all for the inauguration of the first project of "SHAPE-INDIA"— society for hygienic and pollution free environment. May I take this opportunity to thank the organisers for having invited me here and enabled me to share my views with you.

I am happy to note that this project, being taken up by a band of committed people, having a distinguished record in their chosen fields of activity, aims at promoting rural health education and creating awareness about the dangers of Hepatitis-B, AIDS, smoking, etc. in Jangareddygudem and its surroundings. Needless to say, it is a worthy exercise, given the fact that the problems created by HIV are assuming serious dimensions all around. I am sure that this first project of SHAPE-INDIA being undertaken by the students of Priyadarshini Degree College under the supervision of Shri Alugu Ananda Sekhar will go a long way in educating the people about the dangers of this dreaded disease.

Friends, there is no doubt that AIDS is a major health problem of our times with serious human, social, cultural and economic dimensions. It is a rather unfortunate fact that a majority of HIV infected people do not receive proper health care and assistance for lack of resources on the one hand and due to the stigma and discrimination associated with the disease on the other. In fact, a significant number of them are not even aware that they are carriers of this virus. Therefore, a humane approach is required in helping such people. Involving them in education and prevention programmes is essential for creating an environment in which general awareness can limit the further spread of this dreaded disease. Inhuman and discriminatory treatment of those infected will create an atmosphere of secrecy, fear and ignorance about the AIDS epidemic.

*At the inauguration of the first project of SHAPE-INDIA in Priyadarshini College, Jangareddygudem, West Godavari Dist. (February 1999).

Friends, in India, we are slowly becoming aware of the devastating consequences of this disease. Keeping its seriousness in mind, the Government of India launched the National AIDS Control Programme in 1987 to combat this disease. A five-year strategic plan with World Bank assistance was in operation from 1992 to 1997. The main objective of the National AIDS Control Programme is to slow down the spread of HIV so as to reduce future morbidity and mortality due to AIDS. Since the medical world is yet to come out with a successful cure for HIV/AIDS, the emphasis has to be on prevention and care.

An amount of Rs. 280 crore was allocated for the National AIDS Prevention and Control Programme in the Eighth Five-Year Plan, 1992-97. In 1992, the approval of the Cabinet for the utilisation of Rs. 222.60 crore was accorded. Further, an amount of Rs. 45.22 crore was sanctioned for the Blood Safety Component of the AIDS Control Programme. Besides, a credit of US\$ 84 million was made available for this Programme under the World Bank assistance. The Programme is being implemented as a 100 per cent Centrally sponsored scheme.

Under the Ninth Five-Year Plan, 1997-2002, AIDS has received much attention. While strengthening the existing programme activities, the new thrust areas include HIV/AIDS education in secondary schools and among street children, the involvement of industry and public and private sectors and NGOs, the setting up of blood component separation units, continuum of care to HIV infected cases, counselling, advocacy and promotion of voluntary blood donation. Apart from this, efforts and investments have been made to build up health infrastructure and the manpower required to run it.

It is an undeniable fact that voluntary organisations and people belonging to various segments of society such as social workers, public functionaries, students, press, police, judiciary, etc. can make a significant contribution to the cause of social welfare. We have to kindle a feeling of compassion in society for the suffering people everywhere. All of us, irrespective of our profession and field of activity, have to supplement the efforts of the government. 'Service above Self' should be the motto of all. This is the only way we can fight the maladies of poverty, ignorance and disease and contribute to the overall development of our country.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the first project of 'SHAPE-INDIA' and hope that it will lead to a better quality of life for the people of Jangareddygudem.

Thank you.

VISWAKARMAS — A GIFTED AND SKILLED COMMUNITY*

It gives me great pleasure to associate myself with the *Mahasammelan* being organised by the Viswakarma Service Society, Perunna, Changanacherry, Kerala.

Friends, the Viswakarmas are among the highly gifted and skilled communities of our country. This community consists of blacksmiths, bronze-smiths, goldsmiths, carpenters and masons, and their population is said to be about two crores. The term Viswakarma means, 'Architect of the Universe'. In *Rig Veda*, Viswakarma has been personified as a creator with superhuman energy and as a symbol of sacrifice. In *Vishnu Purana*, he is described as the "author of a thousand arts, the mechanist of Gods, the fabricator of all ornaments, the chief of artists, the constructor of the self-moving chariots of the deities and by whose skill men obtain subsistence".

In contemporary times, illiteracy, lack of skills and consequent unemployment are some of the serious problems the Viswakarma community is faced with. We cannot tackle these problems unless our educational system is skill-oriented. Our value-system is such that vocational education has come to be treated as a poor man's option. Needless to say, this attitude is a hindrance to the progress of our country. We in India have to diversify our skills because we have a tremendous variety of traditional skills. Moreover, the skill absorption capacity of our people is amazing.

Jewellery manufacturing and wood-working are the areas in which the Viswakarmas are highly skilled. It is well-known that these areas have a great deal of export potential. Your organisation can specially concentrate on imparting advanced skills in these areas. This would go a long way in not only earning valuable foreign exchange but also in providing gainful employment.

*At the *Mahasammelan* of the Viswakarma Service Society, Changanacherry, Kerala (16 January 1999).

Friends, improving the lot of the backward communities such as the Viswakarmas is one of the primary objectives of our Constitution. It is a document with a social purpose and economic vision. It proclaims social and economic equality as its goal. We are striving for a fair deal for those who are socially and economically poor and unorganised, not as a matter of charity but as a matter of their basic right.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the *Mahasammelan* being organised by the Viswakarma Service Society, Kerala and hope that all of you, like the Viswakarmas of the Vedas, the Puranas and the Epics will perform as architects in building a prosperous, egalitarian and resurgent India.

Thank you.

SERVICE-ORIENTED COMMUNITIES AND SOCIETY*

I am glad to be at the *Mahasabha* of the Rajaka brothers and sisters of East Godavari district under the aegis of the Rajaka Chaitanya Samstha. I would like to convey my new year greetings to all of you present here. The Rajakas constitute a vital segment of our society and perform an important social function: keeping us clean-clothed. It is said that cleanliness is next to godliness. Those who work hard to clean our clothes are almost divine. And therefore, you deserve the very best of rewards for the hard and honest work you do. In earlier times, service oriented communities like potters, barbers, dhobis, etc. operated in the *jajmani* system which was marked by a barter economy. They played a significant part in the ceremonies associated with birth, marriage, death and temple rituals of the Hindu society. In this system, these groups received the protection, patronage and gratitude of society as they attended to the daily needs of the individual very willingly, without really expecting anything in return.

However, with the collapse of the *jajmani* system and the joint family, these communities had to operate in a commercial milieu. This called for modernisation of their methods which entailed financial involvement. Being poor and landless, living as they do on a subsistence economy, these communities are not in a position to meet the financial obligations so necessary for the modernisation of their occupations. The Rajakas are a very good example in this context. A vast majority of the Rajakas are engaged in laundry work which is their ancestral occupation. In this age of door-to-door service, mobile laundry shops have become a common sight everywhere. But it costs money to acquire such a device which is well beyond the means of most of the people. It is here that financial institutions, governmental agencies and voluntary organisations have to step in and assist the community in modernising its professions.

*At the Rajaka Chaitanya Samstha Mahasabha of East Godavari Dist., Kakinada (21 January 1999).

Friends, as awareness about civil rights, human dignity, good living, environmental hygiene, etc. is increasing, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the community to work in unhygienic environs. Therefore, there is a pertinent need to create facilities like washing ghats, etc. near riversides and fencing off tanks where Rajakas work to prevent the entry of animals which spoil the water. These things are within the reach of village Panchayats and Nagarpalikas to handle on their own. But the community must organise itself and put pressure on these public bodies to create facilities congenial for them to work with dignity. For its part, the State Government has initiated a number of welfare schemes and programmes for the amelioration of the lot of the weaker sections. Through the *Aadarana* scheme, tools have been distributed to various occupational communities, including the Rajakas. In our district, nearly 10,000 Rajakas have got iron boxes, buckets and vessels made of brass through my endeavours last year.

There are financial bodies such as the Backward Classes (BC) Finance Corporation at the State level and national level which can be approached to finance new programmes for the benefit of the Rajakas. What is required is a progressive approach on the part of the community to look for modern methods and new techniques in their profession. For example, Rajakas can form cooperatives and go in for electrically operated large scale washing facilities. This will solve the problem of pollution of tanks, etc., besides providing efficient service to the public. Just as power is supplied at subsidised rates for agriculture, occupational groups like the Rajakas can also ask for similar concessions. The concept, novel it may sound though, is indeed feasible and must be pursued by you. It is already there in hospitals and hotels. There was a time when rice was made out of paddy manually. The arrival of rice mills changed that completely. The same can be applied to washing clothes as well.

In this context, I must caution you about one thing. We have noticed that whenever conventional occupations followed by weaker sections get modernised and can be run profitably, it is the well-to-do who step in and marginalise the natives with their money power. This happened visibly in the case of fishing. It is common knowledge that fishing trawlers are owned by the wealthy and upper segments of our society who get a major share of the profits while the fishermen themselves get little and remain poor. Therefore, you must take care and remain alert to see that this does not happen in your profession. You must not allow your profession to be manipulated by the moneyed outsiders.

Friends, I must emphasise that the key to the amelioration of the economic and social conditions of the weaker sections lies in education and employment.

This must not be neglected, if we are serious about community development. Conventional professions do not have the scope to absorb enough numbers and there is considerable extent of disguised unemployment among such groups. Society started doing certain things which it did not do earlier, as it shifted from an old to a modern life style. Today, a lot of people do their own washing of clothes and shaving, to cite two examples. Therefore, enough thrust must be laid on educating the younger generations by making use of the reservation facilities for gainful employment in public services, while the older generations can look after the family occupation.

For my part, I promise to represent your grievances before the Government and strive for their redressal. I am aware of your demands like a Community Hall in Kakinada, waiver of lease fee on ponds, housing, etc. And for your part, you must organise the community and orient it towards the path of progress. In this endeavour, I assure you that I shall stand by you.

Thank you.

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS AND THEIR WELFARE*

It gives me pleasure to be here amidst you once again and I feel honoured to have been invited to inaugurate the Sub-Regional Provident Fund Office in our historic town. I am sure this will, indeed, be a memorable day in the history of Rajahmundry. The setting up of this office marks a step further in the progress of the Godavari delta as an upcoming industrial belt on the Coromandel Coast of Andhra Pradesh.

The Godavari belt has witnessed a spurt in industrial development in recent years. Today, we can see a large concentration of ceramic industry, paper industry, food industry, hotel industry, metal industry and other allied industries in the Godavari districts. And Yanam, in view of its special status, has always been an attractive destination of industrial investments where many industries have been situated. All this has generated a lot of employment opportunities leading to the creation of a large work force, productively engaged in the three thousand industrial establishments in this region.

Friends, industrial progress cannot be meaningful if the needs of the workers are not taken due care. This calls for creating institutional mechanisms to ensure that provisions made for social security and community well-being are implemented for the benefit of the work force. It is for this reason that this office is being set up here. This office will benefit the nearly one lakh workforce engaged in the three thousand industrial establishments of the region. Henceforth, our people do not have to travel all the way to Visakhapatnam to settle their provident fund claims. This may, indeed, be a case of industrial welfare coming closer to the doorsteps of the workers.

You are all aware that right from the time of Independence, we have followed a system of mixed economy which is meant for giving enough scope for private enterprise and individual initiative to play their role in the industrial development of India. While the commanding heights of our

*At the function organised by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation, Rajahmundry (4 June 1999).

economy were held by the public sector, a large number of important industries are in the private sector as well, wherein millions of people earn their living. In order to secure the welfare of the work force engaged in the private sector, the Government has enacted many labour laws and the Provident Fund Act is one such case in social legislation.

Pandit Nehru once described factories as the temples of modern India. If factories are temples, the workers are like priests and the entrepreneurs are like trustees. For the smooth running of our industries, there should be mutual trust and goodwill between the owners and the workers. It is like a large joint family set up in which every one must have a sense of belonging and a spirit of participation. Workers must be considerate to the pressures of owners and owners in turn must show compassion to the needs of the workers. In order to give legal sanctity of this relation, certain institutional mechanisms have been created which must be utilised fully. The Employees Provident Fund Organisation is one such mechanism which is rendering yeoman's service to ensure the welfare of industrial workers in the private sector.

Friends, in this age of economic liberalisation, information explosion and industrial expansion, we must have a better understanding about concepts like social security and community development. It is common knowledge that workers at the lower levels come from the weaker sections of society who, for lack of literacy, are governed by an attitude of 'here and now' in their consumption patterns.

In this context, entrepreneurs must undertake workers' education and instil in them habits of thrift and economy by encouraging them to subscribe to various schemes of the Provident Fund Organisation, etc. For its part, this organisation must also show initiative and go to the factory premises to advise workers about the benefits of various schemes which are formulated essentially for their welfare.

Now that we have a provident fund office to cover the twin districts of Godavari, I hope it will give a new thrust to the concept of social security of industrial work force in this region.

Thank you.

LIVESTOCK — INTEGRAL PART OF RURAL LIFE*

It gives me great pleasure to be here amidst you at the All India Livestock and Poultry Show, 1998. Let me thank the organisers of this show for having invited me here and given me this opportunity to express my views on an issue which is vital for the improvement of the socio-economic condition of our rural masses.

I am happy to note that the All India Livestock and Poultry Show, 1998 has many laudable objectives such as encouraging breeders in improving the livestock wealth of the country and infusing a spirit of healthy competition among the livestock breeders leading to the development of superior stocks through scientific breeding, feeding, management, etc.

India is endowed with livestock resources of considerable genetic diversity which play a vital role in the life of our rural masses. About 50 per cent of the world's buffalo population is in India and it ranks first in cattle and buffalo population. As regards the population of goat and sheep, our country ranks second and fourth, respectively, in the world.

Our livestock sector not only provides essential proteins for nutritious human diet through milk, meat, egg, etc. but also plays an important role in the utilisation of non-edible agricultural by-products. Livestock also provides raw material and by-products such as hides and skins, blood, bone, fat and casings for industrial and commercial usage.

It goes without saying that our economy and society are closely associated with livestock. As a matter of fact, livestock is an integral part of the socio-economic life in rural India. This sector has a vast economic potential and provides a significant proportion of self-employment opportunities, thereby creating supplementary income for rural population a majority of who are landless labourers and marginal farmers. At a time when the pressure on

*At the All India Livestock and Poultry Show, 1998, Hyderabad (1 November 1998).

cultivated land is increasing rapidly, it has become imperative to provide sustainable means of livelihood in the rural areas by exploiting the opportunities in the livestock sector.

Livestock, especially bulls, cows and buffaloes, has been an integral part of "crop-livestock system" in India's agrarian economy. Sheep and goat provide wool and meat for a large section of the people. Now poultry farming has also become profitable as a full time economic activity.

The fact that nearly 300 million of our rural masses raise and utilise livestock speaks of its importance. It is also obvious from the fact that the asset value of livestock is Rs. 70,000 crore and the share of livestock sector in our Gross Domestic Product stands at 9.2 per cent at current prices. Among the different groups in livestock sector, the dairy sector provides a major share in the livestock income followed by the meat sector. Though the poultry sector comes third, its contribution has increased nearly 6 times during the last two decades.

Given India's strength in the livestock and poultry sectors, we have the potential to do well on the export front as well. However, we need to pay greater attention to the quality aspect. Despite having a huge livestock wealth, it is rather unfortunate that 75 per cent of Indian cattle is non-descript and unproductive. The improvement in productivity mainly depends on an effective management of resources like fodder and manpower, besides livestock related awareness.

There are many problems associated with livestock such as low productivity of animals, inadequate health care, poor quality transportation, low level of artificial insemination technique, etc. These problems can be effectively addressed with a strong commitment on the part of Government Departments related to livestock development and the involvement of people in the process.

Thank you.

ANIMALS ARE MAN'S BEST FRIENDS*

It gives me pleasure to be here amidst you. And I am happy to learn that now we have a divisional office of the Animal Husbandry Department at Amalapuram.

Friends, ours is an agrarian society, by and large, and the place that cattle occupy in such a society is significant for reasons more than one. Animals play a prominent role in our lives economically, socially, emotionally and environmentally. Some animals are man's best friends in nature. When it comes to cattle, the equation is more personal as they have an important role in our daily living. The bullock cart has, for long, been the trade mark of our rural economy. In the villages, it continues to be the chief mode of agricultural transport. In our Konaseema region where roads are not properly developed because of canals, the bullock cart continues to be the widely seen vehicle of the farmer.

The buffalo is another important animal in our life. It is the chief source of livelihood for many people, thanks to the development of the dairy industry. The place of the cow in our social life is well known as an animal having a sacred place in our beliefs and rituals. We are in the habit of worshipping our animals like the cow and trees like the *neem*. The reason behind this practice is the vital role they play in our lives.

That being the significance of animals in our society, it is essential that we must take good care of their well-being. The care I am talking about goes far beyond our emotional attachment for animals. Being a coastal region, our area is prone to cyclones. And floods are a part of our life every year. During such times, our animals are exposed to diseases due to lack of proper care, leading to loss of valuable livestock. Our poultry farms are especially vulnerable to natural calamities leading to large scale death of the birds.

*At the inauguration of Animal Husbandry Divisional Office, Amalapuram (8 August 1998).

That is why, animal husbandry institutions must play a vital role in ensuring the well-being of our cattle. In this context, the setting up of a divisional office of the Department of Animal Husbandry in Amalapuram is a welcome step. This office can exercise better control over the veterinary institutions spread across the Konaseema area. With the administrative office at Amalapuram, it will be easier for the people of Konaseema to approach senior officers and doctors for help and advice to protect the health of our livestock.

In view of the significance of animals in our socio-economic life, the veterinary hospitals right from the panchayat level must play a proactive role in ensuring the health and well-being of our livestock. The people must also come forward to effectively make use of the veterinary department's services. We must approach the hospitals and doctors for advice whenever we are in doubt about the condition of our animals.

We take so much from our animals. It is not just milk or labour. Cow dung is an important source of manure for our fields and fuel for our hearths. Even in death, animals serve us well, while asking very little from us. Therefore, it is our moral duty to attend to their few basic needs—health, hygiene and hunger being some of them.

We must learn the scientific methods of keeping our cattle fit. For this, it is essential that we listen to the advice of the veterinary doctors. Mercifully, our region is bountiful in nature and green fodder is never a problem. But feeding is not all. Breeding is important too. It is here that we need to follow expert advice to develop disease-resistant breed of animals. If our animals are healthy, we are happy.

We need to take expert advice in the context of poultry farming much more systematically. The birds are far more susceptible to infections than animals. Now that poultry farming is gaining momentum, the doctors must come forward to help the poultry farmer. For this, the farmers themselves must show the initiative.

I hope the divisional office would go a long way in helping to improve the health of our veterinary hospitals and the animals.

Thank you.

THE IMPACT OF CINEMA ON SOCIETY*

At the outset, I would like to thank the Movie Artiste's Association for the invitation extended to me. I would also like to congratulate all those artistes and technicians who have been conferred the NANDI Awards by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Cinema has a unique place in our country. The Indian film industry is the biggest in terms of volume and India produces more than 700 films annually in 14 different languages, catering to nearly 60 per cent of our population through a network of theatres and television channels. With such a wide reach, the medium can play a very important role in shaping the thinking and response pattern of our people.

Needless to say, cinema is one of the important art forms of our times. Indeed, it embodies a universal language, a language that is not constrained by artificial barriers of caste, religion or even frontiers. One need not know the language to understand a film. One can relate to a film easily and get involved emotionally without even being aware of the medium of conversation. Perhaps, no other means, with the exception of music and dance, is capable of achieving this trans-cultural exchange of understanding and the sharing of entertainment by vast numbers as the cinema does. Therefore, in a highly diversified country like ours, cinema is singularly placed to act as a crucial tool to serve society and promote national integration.

In this context, here comes an important question, and that is how best can we use cinema for the good of the people? Can we use the cinema for motivating, for instructing, for purposiveness and for social engineering? Our country is faced with innumerable problems. Can we use the medium of cinema to address these problems? I would say, the answer is in the affirmative. Cinema does present a medium, the judicious use of which will go a long way in at least making people aware of the current problems,

*At the Movie Artistes' Association function to felicitate the NANDI award winners, Hyderabad (1 April 1999).

thereby compelling them to think about those issues more purposefully. And once we make the people conscious, we have won half the battle.

To play a meaningful role in society, cinema should be aesthetically and intellectually elevating, and of course sensitive and sensible. We need visionaries as directors, producers and actors who could keep the masses spellbound by presenting a show that is entertaining as well as educative and thought provoking. Cinema is both an art and an industry. We must keep in mind that the creative artiste is also restrained by the necessity to find an audience. Many film makers are increasingly sacrificing creativity to the so called 'public taste'. The overdose of 'masala' in the present-day movies, the increasing demonstration of violence and sex coupled with the portrayal of consumerism carry the seeds of denigrating our cultural values and social ethos. We must guard against this trend.

Friends, I must say that films in regional languages have their own importance in a multi-lingual society like ours. People clearly identify and easily relate themselves to their own language. Therefore, we should make use of our regional films in generating consciousness among people. In this context, I am happy that Andhra Pradesh has produced many illustrious film makers and artistes like the late Shri N.T. Rama Rao and Shri Akkineni Nageswara Rao. Indeed, we are all very happy to have the Dadasaheb Phalke award winner, Shri Nageswara Rao with us today. The Telugu film industry is indebted to him and to all those who have contributed directly or indirectly towards the promotion of Telugu cinema.

I am glad to learn that the Movie Artistes' Association, founded by our popular film star Chiranjeevi, is helping film artistes in many ways. It is, indeed, quite a noteworthy endeavour as in this industry also, there are people who need help and support. I commend the Association for its endeavours and its programme to felicitate the NANDI Award winners.

Before I conclude, I once again congratulate the NANDI awardees for their achievements and wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

Thank you.

MADRAS TELUGU ACADEMY — A TEMPLE OF CULTURE*

It gives me immense pleasure to be here amidst you at the Ugadi Purashkar function of the Madras Telugu Academy and I say this in no formality usually observed while making speeches from public podiums. The sentiments come from the heart. Such is the prestige the Madras Telugu Academy has earned in the hearts of the people that to be invited to its functions is indeed an honour. And to be the chief guest at its famed Ugadi Purashkar function is really a proud privilege. I am grateful to the Academy for according me this honour. Before I go further, I would like to convey my Ugadi greetings and good wishes to everybody present here. May the new year bring peace and progress, prosperity and tranquillity to the country.

Friends, we are all aware of the yeoman services the Madras Telugu Academy is doing to the cause of national integration through the medium of culture. We the Indians have a rich and diverse cultural heritage to feel proud of. It is just as well that we make use of this as an instrument to integrate all Indians into one entity and one nationality. Through national unity we can endeavour for universal integration. If our unity is based on visualising our diversity as a source of strength, we will be able to understand and assimilate easily what is not ours. And, this is the real foundation of the integration of mankind as a whole. The ability to relate to the unknown with a desire to know and with an urge to understand is the key to human integration. This theme had been highlighted in our ancient *shastras* to emphasise the essential oneness of mankind. This *sloka* from the *Panchatantra* inscribed on the walls of Parliament House is quite instructive: 'That one is mine and the other a stranger is the concept of little minds. But to the large hearted the world itself is their family'.

The inner urges and emotional aspirations are the same all over the world. This is because human nature and human needs are basically the

*At the Ugadi Purashkar Function, 1999 of the Madras Telugu Academy, Chennai (14 March 1999).

same. Mankind is governed by the social instinct—the urge to belong and to come together. Art addresses these urges and culture caters to these concerns because its medium is universal. The sound of music is something that everybody understands and enjoys. That is why it is said:

“Sisur vetti pasurvetti vetti gaana rasambu phanihi”

The power of music is such that it can transport the spirit to a different level of existence even if it is for a short while. In the process, the mind is spiritualised and a beautiful serenity comes to dawn on us. We become blissful and ennobled. This helps us to rise above petty feelings that divide one man from another and go far beyond the reach of vengeance and vendetta. We see the world as one entity and the mankind as one community. The spiritualness of our music is especially suited to emphasise universal brotherhood as the compositions reveal.

Music composers of yore like Annamaiah, Puranadaradasa, Tyagaiah, Muthuswamy Dixitar and Syama Sastry in the south, Tulsi Das, Kabir and Meerabai in the north, Tukaram in the west and Jayadeva in the east had experienced this spiritual bliss and the result is the priceless compositions they left behind, which we sing with devotion, piety and gaiety. Music has the power to bring mankind together cutting across all artificial barriers because its appeal is to the human emotions. There is hardly any soul, however troubled it be, that cannot take solace from the sweet sound of music.

Same is the case with other art forms like dance, drama and literature. The aesthetics and rhythm that dance brings out, the pleasures and pathos, ecstasy and agony of life that drama portrays, the power of the written word that literature stands for, are all reflections of the higher manifestations of human life. Therefore, music, dance, drama and literature are the four pillars on which culture rests and rises. It is an instrument, a medium through which we celebrate the various aspects of life. That is why it is said that culture is the cult of enlightenment and the culmination of refinement. The reason why art holds an ageless appeal is that it symbolises the vitality of life through the performance of the living.

The Madras Telugu Academy incorporates in its logo all these four elements, viz. the Madras Telugu Sangita Academy, the Madras Telugu Nrutya Academy, the Madras Telugu Nataka Academy and the Madras Telugu Sahitya Academy, in its movement to promote national unity and universal integration. In all these four elements of culture, the Telugus have distinguished themselves, attained great heights of excellence and left behind a rich legacy which we must carry forward. People like Annamaiah, Tyagaiah and

Kshetraiah in music, Siddhendra Yogi, Nataraja Ramakrishna, Vempati Chinna Satyam, the Reddy duo and Swapna Sundari in dance, Ballari Raghava, Shanmukhi, Pisapati, A.V., D.V., the Surabhi Group, and others in drama; Peddana, Tikkana, Errana, Gurajada, Gurram Chelam, Sri Sri Vishvantha, Arudra, Butchibabu, Ramalakshmi, Ranganayakamma, Malathi Chandur and others in literature have produced priceless works of art about which we rightly feel proud of. It is our duty to carry forward their legacy by recognising and rewarding merit in whatever from it appears.

Inspired by the sublime creations of these cult figures, the Madras Telugu Academy seeks to honour every year on the occasion of Ugadi—the Telugu New Year — the individuals who distinguish themselves in their chosen fields and do us proud by their achievements. It is indeed a laudable move as it becomes a source of inspiration for others to emulate and achieve excellence. In the process, we enrich our cultural heritage and become a refined community striving for the propagation of higher values of life. These values are what our Shastras call *Satyam*, *Shivam* and *Sundaram* which correspond to truth, bliss and beauty. We all strive to be truthful in our conduct to attain nobility. We try to realise the bliss of life through our creativity. And we learn to see beauty in the bountiful nature around us. All this we seek to realise through arts such as music, dance, drama and literature which portray human aspirations and hopes, dreams and determination, emotions and urges. This is what is called culture which is a system of values and ideals we seek to protect and promote. It is these values and ideals that hold societies together. That is why it is said that culture is what we are as a people. It is a matter of values all the way. While values are specific to societies, there are certain values which are universal like *Satyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram*. Every society seeks to live truthfully, blissfully and beautifully. When the goal is common, we can achieve it more easily through a spirit of brotherhood and bonhomie and through harmony and goodwill. And cultures seek to promote this spirit which binds societies into a universal bond. And this is precisely what the Madras Telugu Academy and its sister concern Bharat Cultural Integration Committee are doing — promoting the cultural integration of mankind.

I am extremely glad to know that the Academy honours all the youngsters who top in the tenth class examination of every State. To bring all these young gems together and felicitate them for their merit is a creative step that deserves whole-hearted commendation from one and all. I am particularly enthused to note that many child prodigies are here to give a demonstration of their talents. I am happy that the Nistala sisters are also here to give a demonstration in *Ganitha Astavadhanam*. They have mesmerised everybody

in Delhi with their wizardry in mathematics and memory power. I look forward to the performances of these future hopes of India.

I congratulate the winners of the Ugadi Purashkar and wish them all success in their endeavours to achieve further heights of excellence and bring glory to our culture. I commend the Madras Telugu Academy, especially its founder and promotor Shri T.V.K. Shastry and the patrons who are keeping up the Telugu flame aglow in Madras, for the great service they are rendering to the cause of culture. I wish Shastry garu the best in all his future endeavours. I am aware that you are all eagerly looking forward to the performances. I assure you that I am as much eager. Let us enjoy this evening of cultural feast. Before I take leave, once again I would like to convey Ugadi greetings and good wishes to all of you.

Thank you.

TAMIL SOIL AND TELUGU CULTURE*

I am happy to be here amidst you today to inaugurate the new building complex of the Andhra Social and Cultural Association. It is a pleasurable coincidence that both the Telugu Speakers of the Lok Sabha have been associated with the building projects of this institution. While my illustrious predecessor and former President of India, Dr. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy laid the foundation stone of the original building, I feel honoured to inaugurate this sprawling new building complex today. I am sure the new facilities would give a further fillip to the social and cultural activities of the Telugu people of Chennai.

We, the Telugus are by nature an industrious and intelligent people and especially when outside Andhra Pradesh, we put our talents and skills to effective use and become highly successful in our chosen callings. The city of Chennai is a fine example in this context. There is a sizeable chunk of Telugus here who have made a huge success of their professions. All the big names in the film industry have started their careers from here.

Perhaps the Tamil soil is especially conducive for Telugu cultural advancement. It was on this soil that Saint Tyagaraja composed thousands of immortal *kirtanas* which today form the fountain of carnatic music. It is on this soil that Balamurali and Chinna Moulana scaled great musical heights. It is here that Vempati Chinna Satyam runs his famed Kuchipudi Dance Academy. Mandolin Srinivas flourished here as a child prodigy of the strings.

The Andhras have an emotional attachment towards Chennai which is still known as Chennapatnam in common parlance. They have enriched the life of this city in ways more than one. They have contributed to the industrial progress, cultural advancement and literary attainment of Chennai. Sri Sri and Arudra lived here. N.T.R., A.N.R., Sobhan Babu, Krishna and a host of other film personalities have their homes here. It was here that Ghantasala

*At the function to inaugurate the new building complex of the Andhra Social and Cultural Association, Chennai (26 July 1998).

gave full expression to his melodious voice and rendered thousands of songs which continue to enchant us. It is here that our beloved Balu has built his reputation as a formidable singer.

In fact, Chennai played a very crucial role in the cultural development of the Telugus. As the capital of the then Madras province, of which the Coastal Andhra was a part, this city was a thriving centre of Telugu cultural activity. It offered home to many eminent personalities in various walks of life from Andhra. Andhra Kesari Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu garu and Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao garu were some such giants amongst the galaxy of Telugus who lived here.

The place of Howrah Mail and Circar Express are unforgettable to Telugus in their relation with Madras, now renamed as Chennai. But it is the name Madras that got etched in our hearts as a city of music and dance, dreams and romance, film stars and studios, Marina Beach and Moore Market, etc. A visit to Tirupati would never be complete without stretching it to this historic city in the old days.

When we got a separate State of Andhra in 1953 and moved out, a large number of Telugus stayed back and settled down here. It was perhaps in anticipation of their social needs that this Association was formed in 1952! Today, it has grown into a massive organisation with a membership of 1800 and an impressive infrastructure. It is an example worthy of emulation by Telugu cultural organisations in other States and abroad. I would like to congratulate every one involved in this project.

The Telugus have a rich cultural heritage to feel proud of. Wherever we go, we carry this heritage and become the cultural ambassadors of the people back home. Besides, culture is what gives a meaning to our lives as human beings and an identity to us as a social community. The urge to splurge our inner feelings, emotions, expressions, etc. requires outlets for manifestation. In this context, cultural organisations have to perform a dual function. They have to strengthen a broad-minded community consciousness on the one hand and they have to provide outlets for creative talents of the community on the other. Very often, this talent is amateur in shape. Culture need not always be a professional avocation. It is an inherent aspect of our life. Culture is what we are as a person and as a people. We all have singers, dancers, actors, etc. hidden in us. When we come together as a community, these emotions long for manifestation just for the pleasure of expressing our creativity and this is especially true when we live away from our natural habitat.

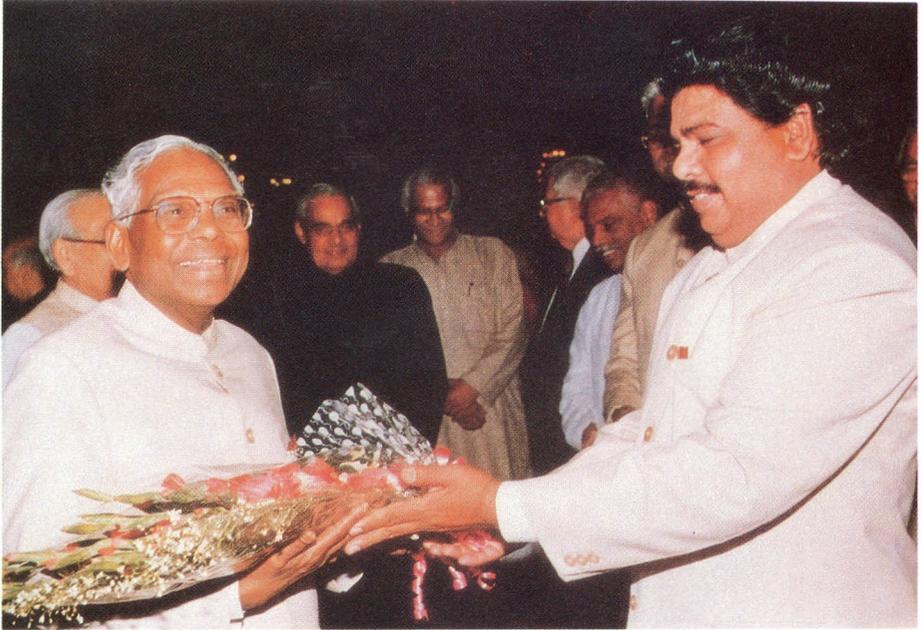
That is why cultural organisations have a vital role to perform in the life of a community. They have an especially sensitive role to play when operating outside their homeland. They have to foster a community spirit amongst the people, portray the richness of their culture to the natives of their adopted homeland and maintain a constant relation with their native land. This is a very demanding task which calls for time, talent and resources. In this, Chennai serves as an example worthy of emulation by Telugus elsewhere. The Telugu cultural organisations here are doing a wonderful job. The Madras Telugu Academy is doing us proud by undertaking creative activities like the Spirit of Freedom concerts and Ugadi Purashkar festivals. The Andhra Social and Cultural Association is another important organisation of the Telugus of Chennai. It is fulfilling a vital function and that is to give the community a distinct social and cultural identity. I hope this new building complex with its new facilities will serve as a meeting point for the members in particular and the community in general.

Friends, there is a tendency among cultural organisations to compete with one another and work at cross purposes. This divides the community and leads to fracas, bringing a bad reputation to our culture. Therefore, competition must be avoided at all costs. I know it is easier said than done. We are aware of the saying that if there are three Telugus, there will be four groups! That is why it is essential that leadership of cultural organisations must be in the hands of enlightened men and women who have a broader understanding of our culture in mind and wider interests of the community at heart. In such a scenario, various organisations of the same community would function in mutual harmony and understanding. They would promote the cause for which they come into existence. Culture must help us in broadening the mind and widening the heart. What is culture? I would say, culture is the cult of enlightenment. It is indeed the culmination of refinement.

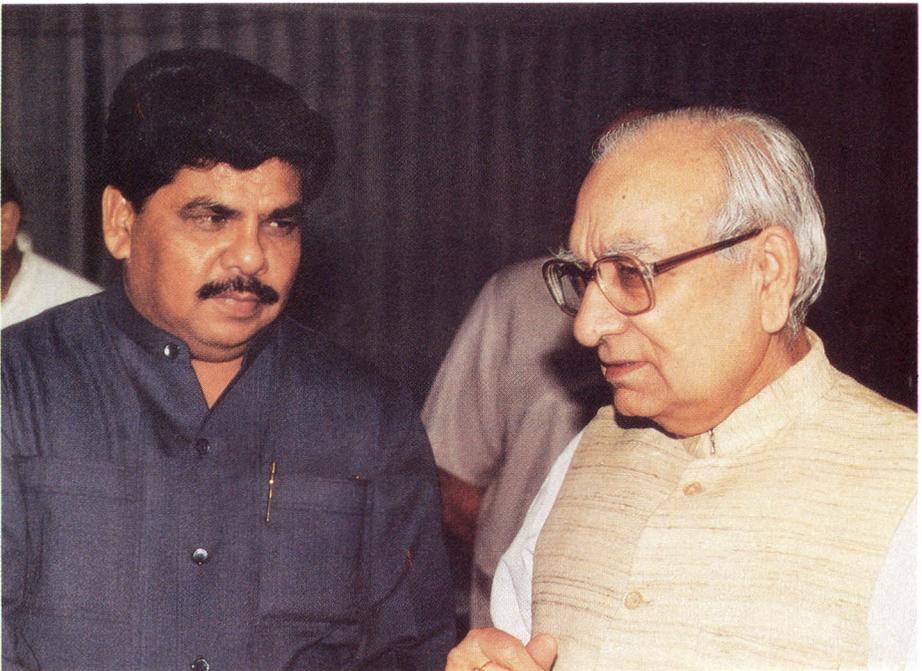
Before I wind up, I must make an appeal to all of you here. There are many art forms in Andhra which are facing difficult days due to lack of patronage. You must give them support in your activities by bringing artistes from Andhra for performances. Art forms like *Harikatha*, *Burrakatha*, *Bhatrajulu*, *Pagativesham*, *Tolubommatala*, mythological drama, etc. are in need of your benign patronage. I hope you will help these art forms with sympathy towards the artistes.

I have pleasure to be here with you today and I wish the Andhra Social and Cultural Association every success in all its endeavours. I congratulate those who have been felicitated today for their accomplishments in their fields. I wish them all the best. And my best wishes to all of you as well.

Thank you.



With the President of India, Shri K.R. Narayanan



With the Vice-President of India and Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Shri Krishan Kant



With the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee



With the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Also seen in the picture is Shri K. Yerrannaidu, Leader of T.D.P. and former Union Minister



With the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Members of Parliament



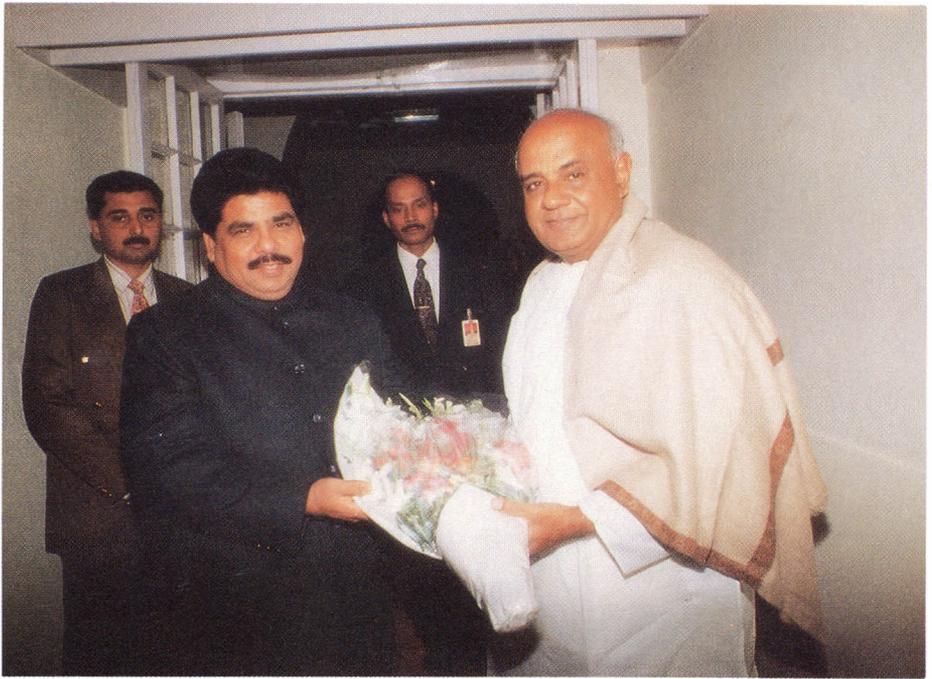
With the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and former Speaker, Lok Sabha, Shri P.A. Sangma



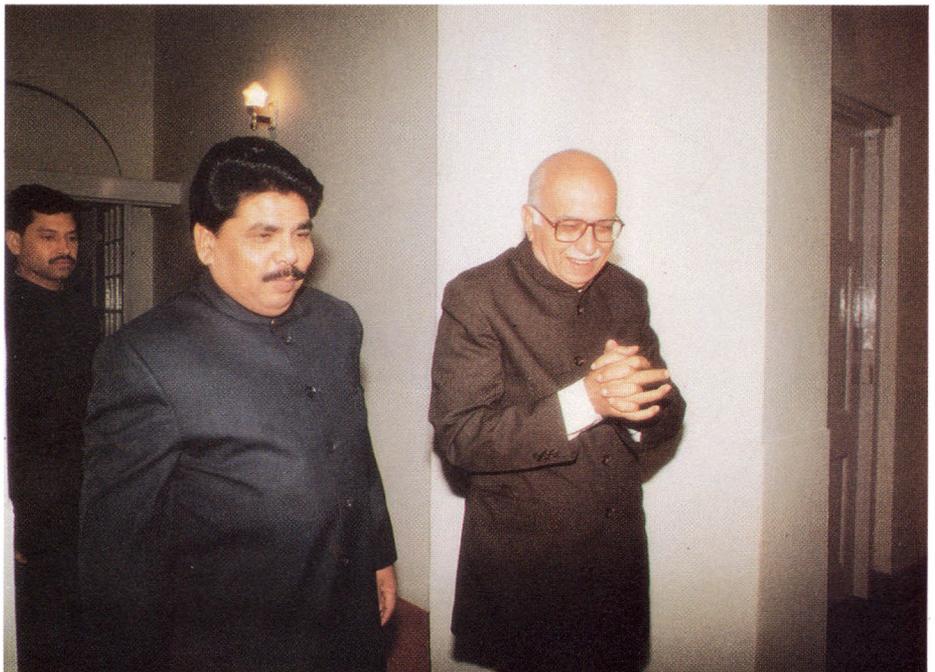
With the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and people of Konaseema



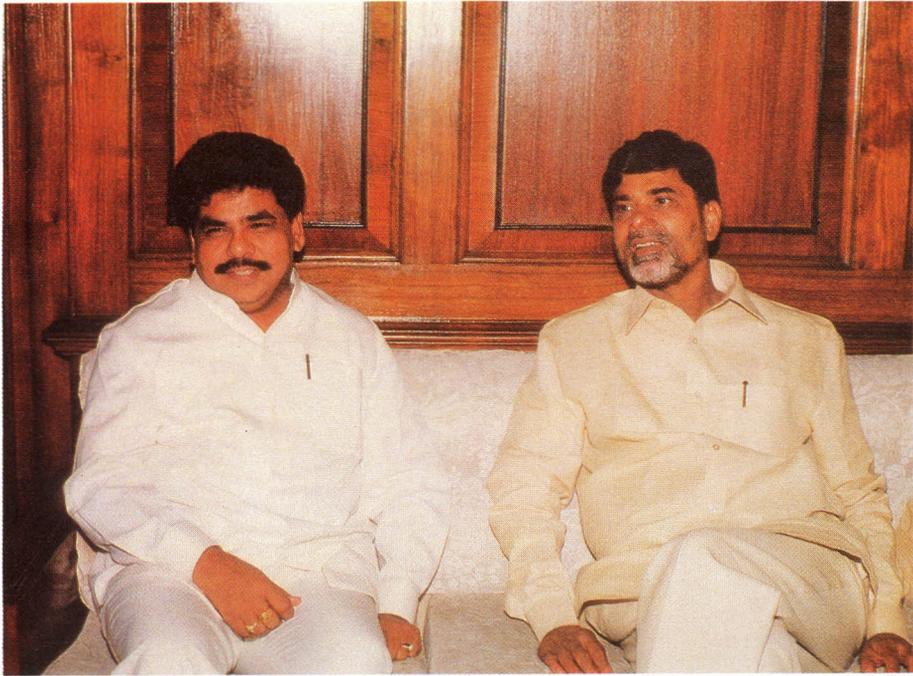
With the former Prime Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao



With Shri H.D. Deve Gowda, former Prime Minister



With the Union Home Minister, Shri L.K. Advani



With the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu



With Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar, former Speaker of Lok Sabha



With Shri Shivraj V. Patil, former Speaker of Lok Sabha



With Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, Dy. Chairperson, Rajya Sabha and
Shri Charti Lal Goel, former Speaker, Delhi Vidhan Sabha



With the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Suraj Bhan



With the Deputy Speaker, Lok Sabha, Shri P.M. Sayeed



With the former Secretary-General, Lok Sabha, Shri S. Gopalan



With the Secretary-General, Lok Sabha, Shri G.C. Malhotra



With a Farmers' Delegation from Andhra Pradesh



Sight-seeing during the visit of Indian Parliamentary Delegation to Russia



At Jwong Island, Singapore



With the staff members of Lok Sabha Secretariat

IV

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

BANKS — THE LIFE-LINE OF OUR ECONOMY*

It gives me great pleasure to be with you here today at the inaugural function of the A.P. Bhavan Branch of the Andhra Bank. Indeed it will meet a long-felt need of the people visiting Andhra Bhavan and those staying and working in its vicinity.

The importance of banking sector in the process of economic development can hardly be overemphasised. Traditionally, banks have acted as repositories of the savings of the community and as agents of credit. They have since moved a long way from their original roles as moneylenders and are now playing a dominant role in the functioning of the financial system.

Over the years, India has been able to build up a strong financial infrastructure. It has registered a remarkable growth in terms of expansion. Consequently, the average population per bank ratio has also improved. More importantly, it has penetrated deep into the rural and semi-urban areas, thereby bringing a transformation of the sectoral distribution of bank credit in favour of small farmers, small enterprises and the self-employed people. With a focus on 'social objectives', the public sector banks have played an important role in the development and economic emancipation of the neglected and weaker sections of our society. They have also played a catalytic role in the development of backward areas in our country.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the financial sector reforms have had a positive impact on the performance of our banks. The removal of external constraints on banks and the adoption of many internationally accepted prudential norms have helped our banks to perform better than ever before. There is, however, a great scope to improve the performance further so as to satisfactorily meet the needs of the customers.

*At the function to inaugurate the A.P. Bhavan Branch of the Andhra Bank, New Delhi (11 May 1999).

It is a fact that as of now our public sector banks are discharging their social banking obligations largely through meeting priority sector targets. They are also catering to the needs of urban people, including corporates, investors and consumers who are both quality and time conscious. It has to be kept in mind that the demands of these people on the banks are substantially different from those of the rural and semi-urban people. A majority of the people in urban and metropolitan areas are literate, time conscious and conversant with banking practices and procedures. These are the people who form the main source of profits for the banks, and naturally put pressure on them to deliver fast and better services. This section forms the market for the banks which is increasingly getting transformed into a buyers' market from one of sellers' market under the fast changing banking climate in India. Many new private sector banks and foreign banks have emerged with an eye to capture this segment, in the process bringing an element of competition which is forcing our banks to adopt various measures to keep their market intact.

In such an environment, an environment that is competitive, an environment where consumers of banking service are increasingly getting cost and quality conscious, banks have no other way but to go all out to satisfy the consumers by way of quick and efficient service. There is an imperative for the banks to adopt a proactive approach and reach out to the consumers. It will greatly help the banks if they prepare different packages of services to meet the needs of customers. Besides, our banks have to devise methods towards reducing the percentage of non-performing assets.

In recent times, modernisation and technological upgradation has become necessary to manage the growing volume of transactions and to meet customers' needs expeditiously. Banks have to rely increasingly on computer based technologies to strengthen internal controls, to improve the accuracy of records, and to facilitate provision of new products and services. Coupled with a sound business strategy and a competent and responsible management, the computerization of banking operations will no doubt go a long way in increasing the efficiency of the banking sector to serve the ever increasing demands of the public.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that our public sector banks have responded well to the demands of the banking environment in a globalised economy. They have taken a number of steps to meet the challenges. Many of our banks have installed ATM facilities and issued plastic cards to facilitate quick transactions. However, our public sector banks have to provide more and more convenience to customers if they want to maintain their lead role in the banking sector.

Among our public sector banks, I am happy to note that the Andhra Bank with a network of 1006 full-fledged branches and 85 extension counters spread over 17 States and two Union territories is doing quite well. This bank has many firsts to its credit. I understand that it is the first bank to introduce the new concept of Satellite branches to serve remote villages, the first public sector bank to have affiliation with three leading credit card operating institutions, *i.e.*, VISA, Master card and JCB, the first bank to introduce International Credit Card and the first public sector bank that has its own on-line transaction processing system. The performance of the bank has been impressive and it has achieved a spectacular growth rate of 33.75 per cent in 1998-99. In respect of priority sector advances, the bank has also made a remarkable advance as it has crossed the stipulated 40 per cent norm. It is also contributing significantly towards the improvement of the living standards of the weaker sections of our society by way of providing financial assistance to their enterprises. The bank's credit card is becoming more popular and the computerization of its operations has greatly helped to streamline its functioning and improve efficiency.

As competition increases, so do the challenges. Therefore, every Bank has to gear itself to give an adequate response. I am happy that the Management of the Andhra Bank is taking steps to reorient its policies so as to provide a professionalised approach to its entire operations and maintain a place for itself in the banking sector in India.

With these words, I have great pleasure to inaugurate the A.P. Bhavan Branch of the Andhra Bank, the 15th one in Delhi.

Thank you.

BANKING SECTOR — CHALLENGES AHEAD*

It gives me pleasure to be here amidst you today to inaugurate the 25th General Body Meeting of the SBI Officers' Association, (Hyderabad Circle).

Friends, banks are the lifeline of our economy. They play a very sensitive and vital role in the commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors, to name a few important areas of our economy. In this, the State Bank of India stands foremost among our public sector banks as it plays a pioneering role in accelerating the economic development of the country with its branches spread all over India. Being the oldest and largest among our banks, the SBI is synonymous with safety and security of deposits in common parlance. We often hear people say "as safe as State Bank" in terms of security of money. This must be a matter of immense pride to the officers of the bank and I congratulate you on the trust you have built up with the public.

With the initiation of the reform process, however, the thrust and orientation of our economy has changed remarkably. The reform process has opened up new opportunities to exploit and new challenges to confront in the financial world. In this context, the banking sector has to gear up to face the realities of a post-liberalised economy. It has to go in for modernisation of its operations in a big way. As a sequel to liberalisation, there are private banking enterprises, including foreign banks, with which you have to compete now. This must be seen as an important opportunity to hone your competitive skills rather than as a threat. This calls for large scale computerisation of our banking operations, besides introducing modern management skills and techniques to simplify cumbersome procedures.

At the moment, it appears that our banks have been caught in a maze of paper work much to the inconvenience and irritation of the customers. In this age of jet speed, it still takes a couple of days for a demand draft to be

*At the 25th General Body Meeting of the SBI Officers' Association, (Hyderabad circle), Visakhapatnam (2 May 1998).

encashed despite the fact that these are issued only against cash payment. And in the case of cheques, perhaps, it takes much longer time to realise. I am sure, this will look primitive to somebody from the advanced world. Even opening an account is not an easy job. A customer is subjected to all kinds of procedural delays before he can open an account and often this happens in genuine cases.

In our country, a bank job is treated as a prestigious and secure employment and it is rightly so. But, having secured such a prestigious employment, there is a tendency to treat the very same security in defence of sloth. Perhaps, this attitude was per force tolerated in the pre-reform phase when our economy functioned in an insulated environment. But, now the situation has changed drastically with the arrival of private initiative in the banking sector. Therefore, as officers, you have a great responsibility in inspiring and sensitising the lower staff to face the challenges of the changing times and the new demands of a recently liberalised economy.

There are many misconceptions in the minds of the lower staff regarding liberalisation, computerisation, etc., and again, it is the responsibility of the officers to remove these misconceptions and educate their staff. For instance, there is a certain amount of misinformed apprehension in the minds of the bank employees about opening the financial sector to foreign participation. Even, computerisation is seen as a device to reduce employment opportunities while it is, indeed, a crying need of the hour. We must learn to see things in a larger perspective than from a narrow angle of our personal interests. Just because the candle making industry employs a lot of people, can we avoid using electricity? We have seen what wonders computers are doing in the sphere of railway bookings. Will it not be profitable to link all branches of a bank to a computer network? Drafts and cheques can be cleared instantly. We have to see the banking sector not merely as a potential source of employment but as a vital instrument of development. It is the overall economic development which offers a greater scope for employment than manual operations in vital sectors of the economy.

And development calls for a forward-looking orientation on the part of every educated person rather than an inward-looking attitude. Teaming millions of our countrymen are struggling for a square meal a day. How to achieve greater economic prosperity should be the concern of every productive sector and more so of the banking sector which is an important catalyst of economic development.

Economic development is a larger concept and not merely a matter of statistics. It involves social development as well. Even though the operations

of our banks are commercial in nature, their objectives are far more comprehensive than commerce can comprehend. In other words, the social angle is an important component of development. The lead bank scheme is an aspect of this component. Agricultural, housing and educational loans are other instances of the social angle of banking. There is also a persistent need to promote rural credit and credit to weaker and deprived sections as part of social banking. Rural banking as such needs to be addressed seriously. Banks do not operate in a vacuum but in society and for society. The social responsibility, however, need not blunt the competitive edge of our public sector banks *vis-a-vis* the liberalised atmosphere. On the contrary, this should give the industry an extra fillip to march forward on the path to progress. In this context, the Narasimham Committee Report must be studied seriously to retrieve our banks from employment-oriented operations devoid of commercial viability. While foreign banks have introduced a mind-boggling technology to modernise their operations, we are still stuck up in this regard.

Friends, vital sectors of our economy as also other spheres of our national life are in an out-dated stage. There is a crying need to introduce reforms in all these areas to bring them in tune with the changing times. Unfortunately, there is a stiff resistance to reforms in our country on the basis of imagined insecurities and misguided propaganda. As a result, the concept of reforms which is essentially economic in nature is today highly politicized and in the process, the thrust is lost.

I am aware that this is only a meeting of the SBI Officers' Association and not an official meeting of the bank itself. Yet, I have consciously raised certain issues for your consideration and deliberation. I trust you would discuss these matters in earnest.

I wish the SBI Officers' Association all the very best in its endeavours to promote a spirit of brotherhood and bonhomie in the banking service. From a modest figure of 163, this Association has grown into a family of 5,600 officers working in 810 branches in our State and also elsewhere. I hope this Association will further grow in strength and stature in tune with the State Bank's image. Institutions are what their managements make them to be. If the SBI is a prestigious bank today, it is because of the endeavours of its officers and staff. I wish this Association all success in its activities.

Thank you.

CO-OPERATIVE BANKING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me great pleasure to be here amidst you at the inauguration of the Vasundhara Co-operative Urban Bank Ltd., Habsiguda. This event has a special meaning for me as I myself was associated with the co-operative movement and held the post of the Vice-President, Kakinada Co-operative Urban Bank, some years back. This function provides another opportunity for us to redeem our commitment to the co-operative movement.

Friends, the importance of co-operatives, particularly in the banking sector, can hardly be over-emphasised. Indeed, co-operation among individuals is fundamental to the development of the individual and the society as a whole. It is a way of life, wherein people unite democratically in a spirit of mutual help and get beneficial access to the goods and services they need.

In the past, people, particularly the poor and the weaker sections of our society, were helpless victims of exploitation by the rich and the money-lenders. Consequently, indebtedness was a perpetual source of suffering that never came to an end which sometimes led to bonded labour. However, the introduction of banks gave a fatal blow to this system. In this fight against exploitation the co-operative banks also played a vital role as they helped the various sections of our society to live and work with dignity and also achieve prosperity.

We all know that co-operative enterprises provide a substitute for profit motive and ensure equitable distribution of wealth and income. Eliminating unnecessary wastes and intermediaries, cooperative bodies retain profits for the benefit of their members. By pooling together the small savings of people, co-operative banks have helped in no small measure in the industrial and agricultural development of our country.

*At the function to inaugurate the Vasundhara Co-operative Urban Bank Ltd., Habsiguda, Hyderabad (29 August 1998).

The co-operative sector has already traversed a long distance. In fact, the remarkable growth shown by this sector speaks of its maturity. In the world of co-operatives, banking has established itself as an important sector. By tapping the otherwise small and marginal savings of people, it has been able to provide them the necessary credit at a considerably lower rate of interest. In turn, this has helped our small farmers, entrepreneurs and artisans to create durable assets.

It is heartening to note that the performance of co-operative banking institutions has shown an overall improvement. Most of the co-operative banking institutions recorded higher growth in deposits and deceleration of credit off-take in 1996-97. Overdues as a per cent of demand of all co-operative credit institutions have shown a slight rise. However, co-operative banking needs to be further strengthened and here comes the importance of professional management. In this age of economic liberalisation, competitive environment and proliferation of private banks, professional management is vital for the growth of co-operative banks. It is also important to introduce modern methods and practices to increase efficiency and productivity. In this context, emphasis has to be laid on the training of the personnel so that they are not only customer-friendly but also compare well with others in the industry. I am happy to know that the Vasundhara Co-operative Urban Bank is computerising its entire operations using state-of-the-art LAN system connecting all points of the bank.

I understand that the Vasundhara Co-operative Urban Bank provides a number of schemes like the Vasundhara Kalyan Deposit, Vasundhara Vidya Vardhak Deposit and Vasundhara Gruha Nirman Deposit. With its thrust area being the uplift of the weaker sections of our society, this bank, I am sure, will definitely contribute to the development of society.

With these words, I am happy to inaugurate the Vasundhara Co-operative Urban Bank Ltd., Habsiguda and wish the management and the staff all the best in their endeavours.

Thank you.

CO-OPERATIVE BANKS — CATALYSTS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me immense pleasure to associate myself with the 50th Anniversary of the Kalyan Co-operative Bank Ltd., Kalol. On this occasion, I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to all those who are associated with this bank.

I am happy to learn that the Kalyan Co-operative Bank Ltd. emerged from an unregistered saving society which was managed by the cotton mill workers belonging to the downtrodden strata of society. Since its inception in 1949, the bank has been serving the oppressed and the poor and helping them in becoming economically self-reliant. I am also happy that motivating and encouraging the poor to inculcate in them the habit of saving from their meagre income has been the motto of your bank. It would certainly help them in solving their economic problems to some extent. The bank has been providing loans to the poor at a low rate of interest which has helped them in establishing cottage industries and ensuring employment to them.

Over the years, the bank has been playing a significant role in promoting the economic uplift of the poor. It is heartening to know that besides rendering economic assistance, the bank has been implementing loan scholarship schemes to provide ample educational opportunities to the bright students belonging to the weaker sections of society.

Friends, in all modern economies, banks act as the dominant financial intermediaries. Their importance and influence grow with the size of the economy in which they operate. They act as the back-bone of the financial sector and the main conduit for transfer of financial resources from persons, households and businesses having a high propensity to save, to the entrepreneurs who can make most efficient use of the capital. Apart from playing the role of intermediaries, banks also create money and are the

*At the 50th Anniversary of the Kalyan Co-operative Bank Ltd., Kalol, Gujarat (8 May 1999).

catalysts in the process of wealth generation. Deposits with banks create credit, and credit used for payment for goods and services create further deposits.

At the time of Independence, the Indian economy had a significant segment which was not covered by the banks on account of remoteness and other factors. But the dynamism and innovativeness shown by the Indian banking system have helped in transforming the shape of our economy, particularly the rural economy.

Needless to say, the economic growth and development of banks are interdependent. It is imperative that the banks help in broad basing economic growth and in bringing about socio-economic transformation. For rapid economic development, it is, indeed, necessary that all sections of the people are brought into the economic mainstream. The special schemes adopted by the banking system in India for the weaker sections have undoubtedly brought about a considerable positive impact in changing the shape of our economy. Over the years, a large number of co-operative banks have come into existence and have been acting as catalysts in helping the poor in becoming prosperous.

In the post-nationalisation era, banks adopted what is known as area approach of banking. As a result, banks in India are now spread all over the country. The presence of banks even in the remote areas would go a long way not only in promoting the habit of thrift among the people living there, but also in helping them with credit for gainful activity.

Friends, the most important thing needed for economic growth of a country is entrepreneurship, which means the capability to take risks in establishing new ventures. The spirit of entrepreneurship can find sustenance only in a society which has a developed financial system. The finance system ensures that the capital which is one of the most important resources for the entrepreneurs is readily made available to them. In developing countries like India, the banks have been playing very important role in development of entrepreneurship.

In the present era of economic liberalisation, banks have acquired a new role in promoting infrastructural development which cannot be the exclusive concern of the government and needs to be opened to the private sector. However, private sector on its own cannot mobilise the kind of resources required and banks are expected to play a very important role in this regard. An efficient banking sector alone cannot hasten the economic growth. Other

factors such as an active capital market, strong infrastructural support, availability of advanced technical know-how and a favourable legislation for labour laws are also required for facilitating economic growth in the country.

With these words, I wish you all success in attaining your objectives and I am sure that the Kalyan Cooperative Bank Ltd. would continue to help in making the poor economically self-reliant.

Thank you.

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT*

It gives me pleasure to be here amidst you and I deem it a privilege to be invited to inaugurate the Convention of Parliamentarians' Forum for Development of Cooperative Movement. I myself was associated with the cooperative movement in a small way when I was vice-President of the Kakinada Cooperative Urban Bank some years back and this occasion makes me nostalgic of those days.

The cooperative movement is aimed at the democratisation of the economy as it involves the active participation of people in the process of economic development, especially in the rural areas. The idea of cooperatives in India was conceived in response to rural poverty which is the root cause of rural exploitation and rural indebtedness. The first enactment in this area, the Cooperative Credit Societies Act, 1904, was made as a means of rural poverty alleviation. The idea was to encourage people to organise themselves into economic communities for mutual benefit on the one hand and for the overall development of the rural economy, on the other.

Today, the cooperative movement is a 94-year-old revolution in the best sense of the word. The movement has traversed a long distance since its inception and pervades every significant aspect of our economy. In Andhra Pradesh, even the field of education is influenced by the movement with the setting up of cooperative junior colleges by spirited youngsters as a fitting response to the crass commercialisation of education. Thus, it has become an all pervading aspect of our economy covering a wide spectrum of areas like, agriculture, sericulture, horticulture, textiles, sugar, banking, housing, manufacturing industry, transportation and education, to name a few vital spheres of activity.

*At the Convention of Parliamentarians' Forum for Development of Cooperative Movement, Delhi (4 June 1998).

However, public health is one area which has not been influenced by the cooperative movement. Just as we have cooperative colleges, we can also have cooperative hospitals in rural areas where even primary health care facilities are non-existent. Even in the sphere of education, the movement is in a rudimentary stage which needs to be given a fillip. Economic development and human development have an organic relationship and neither one can be fully accomplished without the other. Therefore, there is a crying need to bring cooperatives into the spheres of health and education in a big way.

The cooperative movement, though a progressive economic concept, suffers from certain handicaps in India. I shall cite a few, the first handicap is the male domination of the cooperatives and the second is the marginalisation of the weaker sections. No human activity is meaningful without the active participation of women in it. Similarly, no economic activity is meaningful without the active participation of the weaker sections as they constitute an important segment which has long been economically exploited and socially suppressed. But, unfortunately these two segments — women and the weaker sections — are pushed to the periphery in the cooperative movement. Another significant drawback of the movement is excessive politicisation. Like the Panchayat elections, elections to cooperatives are often occasions when money power and muscle power play a major role.

Many of our problems arise due to our tendency to mix politics with economics. The outcome is nothing but a sordid mess as a result of which the exercise loses its sense of direction and purpose. Therefore, it is time the cooperatives are treated as economic entities and the impact of politics reduced considerably. The cooperatives must be made viable business propositions devoid of political overtones and dependence on government patronage for funds, etc. I do not mean to advocate the end of State support. But it should be dispensed within due course for, State funding stultifies the growth of the movement. In the case of cooperative banks, government funding is welcome till the institution stabilises as a commercial venture. However, in this age of liberalisation and globalization, economic institutions must come into their own and become vibrant enterprises fulfilling vital needs of the community. Profit should not be viewed as a dirty word any more. While greed for profit can adversely affect the nature of operations, there is, nonetheless, a need to make profit in order to impart a sense of economic discipline to the enterprise. In this context, the success story of *Anand* is a classic example worthy of emulation elsewhere.

In the above context, parliamentarians have a special responsibility to give a proper direction to people's movements of a constructive nature like the cooperatives. The initiative must come from us to depoliticise the

cooperative movement. If I may say so, the antidote has to come from the very source which has caused the ailment in the first place. Therefore, let us all think seriously about the ways and means of revitalising this movement on sound principles.

One important step in this direction is including this subject in school books. The concept of cooperative studies can be a useful course at the collegiate level and this, in my view, is the best way to spread the spirit of cooperatives. Mass media like movies and TV programmes should be encouraged to focus attention on this movement positively. This is an easy way to make people understand the movement through a medium they can follow. If the people are inspired, new areas of activity can be brought under the scope of cooperatives like afforestation, waste land development, growing organic fodder for cattle, etc., to name a few fields which have not received sufficient attention in the existing framework.

This requires educating the people about the potential of this movement to accelerate economic growth through the amelioration of community groupings. This movement has done wonders for the housing sector in urban areas, for instance. This can be copied in rural areas also where housing is a severe problem, though invisible. The concept of nuclear family is catching up everywhere in the country-side, creating a shortage of dwelling units. In this context, we parliamentarians have a special responsibility in creating awareness among the masses on the beneficial aspects of the cooperatives and prod the people to form cooperative groups. We have to encourage the active participation of women in this movement which will bring them a step closer to full involvement in public affairs at large.

With these words, I have pleasure to inaugurate the Convention and I hope the deliberations of the day will be meaningful and purposive in the furtherance of the movement. I wish the Forum all success in its endeavours to spread this movement to every nook and corner of India.

Thank you.

BANKS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today at the inauguration of the 86th Meeting of the Board of Management of National Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks' Federation.

It is a pleasure to learn that the National Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank's Federation is one of the oldest national organisations in the Cooperative Sector. It has played a significant role in the diversification of the credit business of banks and providing useful service to its member banks in solving several of their problems. Therefore, it is in the fitness of things that the Federation is now working on a comprehensive scheme for deposit mobilisation by agriculture and rural development banks to make them resource based institutions.

Rural banking is vital to Indian social fabric for the simple reason that it is through such means that we can ameliorate the lot of the rural poor, by making available to them the benefits of banking by creating new opportunities and exploiting the existing ones which may, ultimately, lead to the path of quicker socio-economic transformation.

It is for this reason that rural banking has been engaging the attention of the Union Government, the RBI and the NABARD. And, from time to time, expert Committees/Groups were set up to examine the difficulties and suggest measures for improving services in our villages.

The primary causes of rural poverty in India can be traced to the inadequacy of land resources on the one hand and increasing population on the other. The main problem faced in poverty eradication is one of enabling the ever-increasing number of rural families to harness the land and all available natural and man-made resources in productive activities.

*At the Meeting of the Board of Management of the National Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks' Federation, New Delhi (28 September 1998).

Besides, finance in traditional rural economy is used largely for maintenance as distinguished from expansion of productive activities. It is provided by traditional money lenders, village traders, friends and relatives. Often, finance is sought for storage, processing and trading purposes. In the subsistence rural economy, there is a close relationship between the household and the economic enterprise and it is often difficult to distinguish between the production and consumption needs of rural families.

Under these circumstances, there is under-utilisation of land, other natural resources and manpower. Productivity is very low and the economy is stagnant, resulting in a vicious cycle of increasing poverty, on account of low investment, and lower productivity.

In this context, it is the cooperative, agricultural and rural development banks which can play a significant role in remedying this sorry state of affairs by providing credit and ensuring its proper use. The fact that these banks have provided credit amounting to Rs. 23,000/- crore for investment in agriculture and allied activities speaks volumes of their rich contribution in the area of rural development. Over the years, agricultural and rural development banks have been playing a notable role in accelerating economic growth in the villages. They have become effective agencies not only for providing term loans for agriculture but also for various other economic activities in rural areas. Thus, the primary purpose of promoting the cooperative and rural development banks has been to take the small farmers out of the clutches of private money-lenders and, at the same time, facilitate adequate and less expensive finance for investment in agriculture.

There is no doubt that a variety of steps have been taken by the rural banks to facilitate borrowing by agriculturists. The allocation of a substantial part of priority sector advances to agriculture on preferential terms of lending, better refinance facilities, provision of technical and marketing assistance, etc. have led to a remarkable increase in the use of institutional finance by farmers. Adoption of new technologies in agriculture and diversification in land use have enlarged the demand for investible funds.

Though credit by rural banks plays an important role in improving the conditions of the poor villagers, we have to keep in mind that it is not a panacea for all our economic evils.

Rural credit, to be an instrument of progress and to get the needed capital for those who can use it, requires congenial background, conditions and infrastructure. Credit is good only if productively used. To ensure its productive use, there has to be effective and intimate supervision and conditions need to be created to make credit an instrument of progress.

Rural banks can play an effective role as catalytic agents for economic growth through credit deployment, provided sound investment decisions are made and lending is prudent. This requires deep knowledge and understanding of the area and the people served by a bank. This can be done best by posting staff in a particular area for sufficiently long stretch of time, so that the staff can have proper understanding of the customs and usages of the area.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this 86th Meeting of the Board of Management of the National Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks' Federation.

Thank you.

HANDLOOMS AND OUR HERITAGE*

I deem it a privilege to associate myself with the All India Devanga Conference being held in Bangalore.

I am happy to note that the Conference aims at bringing the Devanga community under one fold, regardless of the linguistic barrier, and instilling in the people a sense of responsibility to contribute their bit to the overall development of the community.

It is an undeniable fact that the handloom sector plays a significant role in our country's economy. It is obvious from the fact that after agriculture, it is the largest economic activity. This apart, it provides direct and indirect employment to more than 30.60 lakh weavers households consisting of about 124 lakh weavers which include 60.29 per cent women, 12.15 per cent SC and 20.05 per cent ST weavers.

In this era of large industries and globalisation, we have to ensure that this vital sector is not neglected. Credit is one of the most important inputs for commercial process of handloom production. It is only by providing credit and that too at a concessional rate that we can sustain the handloom sector.

Friends, India has, for ages, given the lead in different fields and the impact of its civilisation and culture has spread to the farthest corners of the world. This has become possible, thanks to the lead given by sages and saints like His Holiness the Devanga Jagadguru. Our culture, our philosophy and our religious traditions are unique in the world for the place of honour they assign to spiritual gurus belonging to various communities, including from the weavers community. Our saints and sages have carried the same divine message of love and peace, devotion and duty, truth and tolerance, service and sacrifice and sowed the seeds of cultural unity and spiritual rejuvenation

*At the All India Devanga Conference, Bangalore (5 December 1998).

of India. Their endless endeavours form the basis of our spirit of tolerance. We have to ensure that narrow outlook and blind adherence to ritualism are replaced by a broad vision and deeper devotion to duty. Evils like caste rigidity and religious bigotry must yield place to a new social order based on eternal values like truth, love, compassion, service and sacrifice.

Friends, religion is a means of serving the humanity. We have to evolve a synthesis in which the progress of mind and spirit are combined with social and economic advancement. There has to be a harmony between spiritualism and science. Today, our country is passing through a period of stresses and strains and there is a crisis of confidence and faith. It is only by following the lofty teachings of our seers and savants and by using the great legacy of our past that we can carve out a great future for our country among the comity of nations.

India has a rich spiritual and religious heritage. Many of our time-tested values are more relevant today than ever before. What gives us strength, and what will give us more fulfilment in life, is a better spiritual mooring, preserving the traditions and our rich heritage. We have to bring in a new kind of spirituality, where there is a healthy blend of inner spiritual wisdom with the rational scientific temper.

The conflict of ideas today is not between one religion and another or one caste or another but between religious faith and gross materialism and greed. Religion must emphasise service to the suffering humanity. Nobody who believes in religion and God can do or tolerate any kind of wrong to fellow human-beings. 'Service above Self' should be the motto of all religious-minded persons.

It is eternal values spread by saints and sages over the ages which provide the basic foundation of our unity and integrity. It is, therefore time for us to reiterate our faith in these fundamental values handed over to us by seers like the Devanga Jagadguru throughout the long course of our country's history and rededicate ourselves to the service of the nation. The Mahaswamiji's message is of special significance when we are at the crossroads of destiny. I am sure his life and teachings would guide and inspire us towards building a strong and united India, where material prosperity is combined with spiritual strength.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the organisers of this function for inviting me here and giving me an opportunity to pay my respects to the Devanga Jagadguru.

HANDLOOM SECTOR — NEED FOR MODERNISATION*

It gives me great pleasure to associate myself with this 17th Appropriate Technology Exhibition being jointly organised by the National Handloom Development Corporation and the Commissioner, Handloom and Textiles, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

It is a pleasure to know that the National Handloom Development Corporation has been organising exhibitions on appropriate technology in weaver clusters with a view to disseminating information regarding various technological developments and innovations. These exhibitions certainly help in providing a forum to the weavers' community for interacting with the Corporation and learning new techniques for improving their productivity and earnings. Needless to say, by organising such exhibitions, the Corporation is rendering a commendable service for the economic development of the weavers.

Handloom sector forms a part of the heritage of India and exemplifies the richness and diversity of our country and the artistry of our weavers. With 70 per cent of the population still living in villages, handloom provides an active link with urban areas. This sector plays a very important role in the country's economy. It is the largest economic activity after agriculture and handlooms and handicrafts provide large scale employment. The production of handloom fabrics has registered more than ten fold increase since the early fifties. This sector accounts for nearly 23 per cent of the total cloth produced in the country and also contributes substantially to the foreign exchange earnings. So it is very important that there should be proper planning and development of this sector.

Friends, Indian handicrafts and handloom products are quite popular in developed countries. But unfortunately in our country, people still think that artificial material is better than man-made stuff and in some places it is

*At the inauguration of the 17th Appropriate Technology Exhibition organised by the National Handloom Development Corporation Ltd., Rajahmundry (4 April 1999).

almost a status symbol. Needless to say, we have to convince more and more of our people about the usefulness of handloom products in order to generate domestic demand which can lead to more production and more employment.

Although our handloom sector is facing problems like obsolete technology, inadequate availability of inputs, etc., it has the potential to be transformed into a major export-oriented activity. A number of schemes are being implemented for the development of this sector which besides providing support to weavers for modernisation of looms, upgradation of weaving skills through training, development of designs, provision of inputs and marketing their products, etc. also aim at the generation of greater employment opportunities for the weavers.

The new handloom policy stresses the need for technology upgradation, providing marketing facilities and giving design inputs to weavers. The Government is committed to establishing institutional mechanisms for providing services, technology and marketing facilities for artisans from small-scale sector village and khadi industry, powerloom industry and handicrafts, apart from the handloom sector.

There is no doubt that an increased emphasis on the development of the handloom sector will be a boon to the economy as investment employment ratio is the lowest in this field which is obvious from the fact that investments in the textile sector creates 35 to 40 per cent more jobs than the national average. Moreover, manufacturing in this sector, apart from being labour-intensive, makes little demand on the conventional sources of energy and has no adverse ecological effect. What is important is to ensure that the real earnings of the weavers rise and all the developmental policies and programmes of the government lead to the uplift of the community as a whole.

Therefore, there is an imperative need to make an objective assessment of the shortcomings in the existing handloom policies. This is the sure way by which we can revitalise this crucial sector thereby making the weaver the ultimate beneficiary. We cannot ignore the fact that without institutional support, the handloom industry will be in serious trouble and its traditional craftsmanship, skill and designs may suffer damage.

Before I conclude, I thank the organisers of this exhibition for having invited me here. I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Exhibition.

Thank you.

PUBLIC ENTERPRISES — CHALLENGES OF MANAGEMENT*

It is a matter of pleasure for me to be here this evening and to associate myself with your activities marking the Annual Management meet of the Institute of Public Enterprise. The remarkable progress it has made and the good work it has been doing over the years in the areas of public sector and social sciences research, training of IAS officers, public sector executives and other senior officers of the government deserves appreciation and encouragement from all of us. Its consultancy work for organisations like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Planning Commission and the Ministries of the Government of India and State Governments has, I understand, earned compliments from various quarters. Its entry into the area of professional management and technical education only goes to prove the Institute's steady progress and diversification in tune with the changing times. These initiatives would, I am sure, effectively supplement the efforts of our Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu towards transforming Hyderabad into 'Cyberabad' and the Silicon Valley of India. I take this opportunity to compliment the Institute for living up to the aims and objectives for which it was established.

Friends, the importance of good management in the context of the on-going economic reforms which we have undertaken in recent years can hardly be over-stressed. The liberalisation of our economy, if carried through efficiently and successfully, would not only make our country market-oriented and integrate it with the emerging global economic structure in a meaningful way, but would also help accelerate economic growth quite significantly. There is no doubt that today the world economy is becoming more and more integrated with changes in the patterns of production, consumption and trade as a result of the changes in technological and other fields.

Needless to say that in this context, the role of management has assumed a great deal of importance. No organisation, whether it is economic, political,

*At the Annual Management Meeting of the Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad (29 December 1998).

social and even religious, can survive without effective management. The principles of management are now universally used for managing not only business organisations but also educational, social, military and government organisations as well.

Management is a dynamic, life giving and life supporting system, without which our resources will remain only resources. They must be tapped, harnessed and utilised for a higher quality of life for which we all yearn. A forward looking institute's culture is characterized by openness, innovativeness, and a creative approach to problem solving. It provides opportunities for continuous improvement and growth.

The 21st century will belong to those institutions which are able to adapt themselves to changes faster than their competitors. Without being adaptable and flexible, they cannot gain a competitive edge. If we look at the success story of many big institutions, we notice some common attributes such as their ability to respond quickly to a variety of demands made on them in consonance with the changing industrial and managerial culture of our society. Continuous learning is also necessary to develop and sustain the competitive edge.

Today, there is a huge investment in the public sector. It is essential that the country get maximum returns on this public investment. The successful and profitable public sector undertakings must further improve their performance and become global players and compete both domestically and internationally. We also need to find a solution to the problems of sick public sector undertakings and provide a good social safety net for the workers of these units. Innovative voluntary retirement schemes and re-training for re-deployment of employees should be given greater attention. The State governments should also undertake reviews of their State level public enterprises and institute State Renewal Funds on the lines of the National Renewal Fund to provide finances for voluntary retirement schemes and for re-training and re-employment. "Employability" of workers is an essential factor in the context of fast changing technologies which demand capability and willingness to learn continuously and adjust to new situations.

Public sector chief executives have to play a dynamic role in revitalising their units and making them 'an engine of growth' as was originally envisaged by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. I am sure that interaction between premier research and academic institutions like the IPE, the SCOPE and all public sector undertakings under the Central and State governments will lead to improvement in the performance, productivity and profitability of the public sector. India needs the inflow of capital, technology and access to markets to

secure rapid economic growth. In this context, both public and private sectors must consider themselves partners in progress and work unitedly to make "India incorporated" a dynamic reality.

Friends, the IPE's collaborative ventures and its initiatives for taking the benefit of bio-technology to the poor farmers of Mahaboobnagar and Nalgonda districts deserve special mention. As you would all agree, transfer of technology and processes are very crucial for economic development.

Our students must be equipped to face the future with confidence and updated knowledge. In future, knowledge will be the real competitive advantage of any country. India must bench-mark its knowledge in frontier areas and be able to provide the best of education. The IPE is recognised as a Centre of Excellence by the Indian Council of Social Science Research. If assisted with some additional facilities and funds, I am sure, it could move from a virtual IIM to a real IIM. I hope that this proposition becomes a reality one day.

The public and private sectors in India must fully support the endeavours of institutes like the IPE to provide quality education, training, research and consultancy work for improving the productivity, performance and profitability of the Indian industry. I am especially pleased to know that the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises and IPE have jointly convened a meeting of public sector companies to discuss issues concerning the public sector to enhance linkages and are also exploring the prospects for improving its performance. I am sure that their deliberations will help in rapid restructuring and transformation of the public sector into a formidable productive instrument which can play an effective role even in an open market economy.

Today, we are honouring Dr. Uddesh Kohli, Chairman, Power Finance Corporation who is also the Chairman of SCOPE. Dr. Kohli is well known for his good work in the Planning Commission and is actively involved in the power sector reforms. It is, therefore, appropriate that his services are recognised and he is honoured by a national institute like the IPE. I am sure that SCOPE's cooperation with IPE will provide the public sector the much needed morale and support in all their activities.

Your Institute has a very dynamic director. Under his leadership, I am sure, the IPE will grow from strength to strength and its students will blaze new trails by providing corporate leadership and make Indian industry and

business internationally competitive. India's future is in their hands and I wish them well in their careers. Indian industry would do well to give them all facilities and opportunities to harness their creative energies for personal and corporate growth. I would like to request all the chief executives of Central and State public enterprises to ensure that their companies work efficiently and effectively. I am sure that they will all take a new year's resolution to bring about a turn around in the fortunes of the public sector in the years ahead and confidently lead India into the next millennium. I wish the distinguished guests, participants and students a very happy and prosperous New Year. I also convey my *Sankranti* greetings to all of you.

Thank you.

GROOMING MANAGERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY*

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to be amidst all of you today on the occasion of the presentation of the Annual Awards for 1999 to various dignitaries who have made a mark in the management community. I am happy to learn that the Hyderabad Management Association which has organised this function is a premier professional organisation of the State of Andhra Pradesh. It has been serving the management community for a long span of three decades and has been rendering a commendable service by providing management education, skill development through training programmes, conducting in-house training programmes for corporate groups, organising conventions, seminars, conferences, workshops by experts and so on.

Friends, the importance of good management in the context of the sweeping economic reforms which we have undertaken since the early 90s can hardly be over-stressed. Radical liberalisation of our economy, if carried through efficiently and successfully, would not only make the Indian economy market-oriented and integrate it with the emerging global structure in a more meaningful way, but would also help accelerate economic growth quite significantly. There is no doubt that the global economy is becoming more and more integrated with changes in patterns of production, consumption and trade as a result of the remarkable developments in technological and other fields.

Needless to say, as a result of these changes, the role of management has assumed a great deal of importance. No organisation, whether it is economic, political, social or even religious, can survive without proper management. The principles of management are now universally used, not only for managing business organisations but educational, social, military and government organisations as well.

*At the annual awards presentation function 1999, organised by the Hyderabad Management Association, Hyderabad (19 June 1999).

Management, in essence, is a dynamic, life-giving and life-supporting system. Without management, our resources of production will remain only resources. They must be properly tapped, appropriately harnessed and effectively utilised for the desired quality of life. They determine, to a large extent, our survival in this highly complex and competitive world, as also the quality of our life.

An effective corporate culture is characterized by openness, innovativeness and a creative approach to problem solving. It also provides opportunities for continuous improvement and steady growth. What makes a particular corporate body a healthy place to work, and another not so healthy or a favourite place? Corporate cultures are focused around certain features like the ability to attract, retain and motivate its employees for excellent performance. Equally important is to build coherent teams and focus on team effort, build an organisational culture where people believe in learning and developing knowledge continuously — a culture which trains and appraises its employees in order to build multiple skills and inculcates a sense of pride for one's association with the organisation.

The 21st century will belong to those organisations which are able to learn faster than their competitors. Without being adaptable and flexible, they cannot gain a competitive edge. If we look at the success story of many big corporations, we will discover some common attributes such as their ability to respond quickly to the variety of demands of the consumers, develop new products and dominate emergent technologies. Continuous learning is also necessary.

Friends, in today's global environment, it is imperative that organisations adopt necessary strategies in order to improve continuously and thereby gain a significant competitive advantage over others. A company's strategy indicates the manner in which it competes in its business. Thus, corporate strategy determines in which business the company will operate and how it will gain an additional competitive advantage by coordinating with the various businesses. An effective strategy chalked out by the organisation will help it gain and sustain the competitive advantage.

For having competitive advantage over others, an organisation has to analyse strength and weaknesses, of its own and those of its competitors; it has to keep track of opportunities lying ahead and the problems it encounters.

Competition is no longer domestic, but global. To succeed, a corporation will have to be among the best, worldwide. Here, unless companies compete in global markets, they cannot attain a sustainable competitive advantage.

An effective manager has to be a dreamer and should inspire others. An organisation without a vision is like a traveller without a destination. An organisation can be successful **only** when the individual goals are centered around organisational goals. The global vision could be a simple dream with high emotional content. Each person is part of the vision, not viewing himself in isolation but as a link in the whole chain.

When the people of an organisation share the vision and common goal, there is always a pride in belonging to the organisation. An effective manager makes it known that he cares for and respects his people. He respects their ideas and dedication and encourages them to be innovative.

I am sure the Hyderabad Management Association's efforts towards "Preparing Professions for the 21st Century" will lead to all-round distinction in professional management not only within our State but also all over the country. In our own State, our beloved Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has also laid utmost emphasis on professional management in all aspects of governance and administration. The vision for the new millennium for the people of Andhra Pradesh as also for the rest of the country could be realized only if we go in for professional management. And therein lies the importance of institutions like the Hyderabad Management Association.

Before I conclude, let me thank the organisers of this function for inviting me here. I heartily congratulate the award winners and hope that it will spur them on to greater efforts for achieving excellence in their respective fields.

Thank you.

INDIAN RAILWAYS—THE NATION ON THE MOVE*

It gives me great pleasure to invite you all to this function, marking the inaugural run of Shatabdi Express, one of the most modern trains of the Indian Railways, from Rajahmundry to Secunderabad. Today is indeed a proud day in the history of Rajahmundry to be the first city in Andhra Pradesh to have a Shatabdi Express connecting it with the State capital. The people of Godavari feel privileged with this honour conferred on their soil. The State is making rapid strides towards building *Swarnandhra Pradesh*, the *Sundara Swapnani* of Telugus through *Janmabhoomi* and "Vision 2020" under the dynamic leadership of our Chief Minister who has redefined politics as a quest for development than a thirst for power. The introduction of Shatabdi Express is one more step in that direction.

Today, Andhra Pradesh is playing a pioneering role in the development of Information Technology as a major industry. Hyderabad is emerging as a prime centre on the IT map of India. With the inauguration of the Hi-tech City, Hyderabad is being called Cyberabad, signifying the pivotal role it is playing in cybernetics. This has given rise to a growing segment of well groomed class of executives and entrepreneurs who are always on the move. This has made it necessary to provide comfortable and quick travel facilities from important centres in the State to the capital city. I am sure Shatabdi Express would fulfil the need of this section of society. The timings are devised in such a way that it would be possible to make a business visit to Hyderabad and come back to Rajahmundry the same day.

Andhra Pradesh is embarking on a major drive to promote tourism in a big way. The Krishna-Godavari delta basin offers a great potential for the development of tourist destinations. Rajahmundry itself is a place of considerable tourist interest within the State. This region has a lot of scope to attract tourists. Therefore it is essential to develop proper infrastructure

*At the inaugural run of Shatabdi Express between Rajahmundry and Secunderabad, Rajahmundry (19 February 1999).

like travel, accommodation and communication facilities to give a thrust to tourism industry. The introduction of this train is a positive step in that direction.

The coastal belt in the State is witnessing expansion in industrial activity. The Godavari delta is going through a process of quiet industrialisation, thereby creating job opportunities in the region for the educated young men and women. Kakinada is emerging as an important port city after Visakhapatnam which is already a leading industrial centre. This naturally calls for improved travel facilities which, I hope, the Railways would keep in mind in future also.

In view of all these developments, there is a growing market for comfortable travel facilities to the State capital. I am sure this train is going to fulfil a vital need of the people to travel fast in comfort to Hyderabad. The people of Godavari are grateful to the Railway Minister for his kind gesture. We are grateful to our beloved Chief Minister for having found time in his otherwise busy schedule to attend this function and make this a proud day in the history of Rajahmundry. I am sure this train will be an important connection between the coastal area and the capital of the State. I hope, the Railways would maintain the train in the same condition as we find it on its inaugural run!

Friends, I must take this opportunity to bring to the notice of the Railway Minister and the South Central Railway authorities the need for reviving the Kotipalli-Kakinada rail route. This would contribute to the development of the Konaseema region which is rich in water resources and abundant in agricultural produce like coconut, rice, sugar-cane, etc. Being on the coast, the region is prone to cyclones and floods which disrupt road traffic seriously, almost every year. A rail route would establish a permanent link between Konaseema and the rest of the country. This would lead to an economic revival of the region. The project is already under the consideration of the Ministry. It needs to be expedited for a speedy completion.

Thank you.

VISAKHAPATNAM PORT – PHENOMENAL GROWTH*

I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Welfare and Shopping Complex of the Dock Labour Board. Prior to this, I had the honour of laying the foundation stone for Shore Protection and the Strengthening of Dredger Berth Project to handle commercial vessels in the harbour as a part of the capacity increasing programme of the Port. I am happy to know that the Visakhapatnam Port has emerged as the busiest port of the country in 1996-97 by handling the highest volume of traffic and established yet another record of traffic in 1997-98. I hope the port will exceed the target for the current financial year also.

There is a huge potential for traffic handling in the Visakhapatnam Port and in order to meet the ever growing demand, I understand, the port has taken up capacity augmentation programmes in a big way. I am told that a large fund is earmarked for infrastructure augmentation programmes like the construction of additional berths, modernisation of system and the development of road and rail network. I trust the facility for which the foundation stone is laid today will go a long way in improving the operational flexibility of the port and in achieving higher records.

I am extremely happy to note that the Port and Dock Labour Board Managements have been giving equal importance to several welfare measures for their personnel. The Dock Labour Board is extending welfare amenities like liberalised advances, loans, medical aid, credit facilities, etc. I understand that the Dock Labour Board runs a primary school, high school and junior college in which scholarships are awarded to meritorious students. Besides, financial assistance is also extended to the employees' children for higher education and technical courses.

*At the function to lay the Foundation Stone for Shore Protection and Strengthening of Dredger Berth and inauguration of the Welfare and Shopping Complex at the Dock Labour Board Colony, Visakhapatnam (18 August 1998).

The Welfare and Shopping Complex is intended to serve the requirements of the residents of this colony. I am told that in this complex, apart from shops, facilities like reading room, meeting hall, adult education centre, homoeo clinic, recreation centre and library will be provided. I am glad to know that the Port Trust has also been carrying out welfare activities in the fields of health, and education for its employees and their families.

The growth of this port has been phenomenal. The port is very important for the industrialisation of this entire area thereby creating many employment opportunities in and around Visakhapatnam. The port has been contributing its mite for the economic development of the region in particular and that of the country in general.

With the development of this port, the city is also growing and I have no doubt that this beautiful city and the port have a very bright future. I appeal to all of you to strive hard for improving the productivity levels so as to enable this port to secure a prominent place among the international ports.

Thank you.

OIL INDUSTRY AND PRIVATE PARTICIPATION*

It is my proud privilege to be here amidst you, especially to be in Visakhapatnam with which I have an emotional relation as I was a student of the Andhra University. Therefore, I am, indeed, happy that an important project like this is coming up in this port city. I commend Mr. Klaver for his support to this crucial enterprise and whole-hearted participation of his company, SHV Energy India Ltd. in this project. This is first Indo-Dutch joint venture project in Visakhapatnam. And I hope this will pave the way for many such projects in this city which is fast emerging as an important industrial centre in the South, especially in the oil sector. I congratulate the team of professionals who have converted this marshy land into a world class oil storage terminal. Today, this terminal stands as a proud testimony to the determination and dynamism of Mr. Sitaramaju and Mr. Vijaya Kumar, the two young entrepreneurs and their team of professionals who have completed this project on time, overcoming the ordeal they have faced over the last two years.

The liberalisation era opened up the oil sector for private enterprise in 1991 and paved the way for a great deal of expansion in the operations of the oil industry. This naturally called for a rapid expansion in infrastructural facilities such as storage. I am glad this project fills up a void in infrastructure. I have no doubt that it will go a long way in accelerating the development of petroleum products like fuel, LPG, naphtha, etc., in this region.

We are all aware of the significance of oil for economic development. Fuel is to the nation's economy what blood is to the human anatomy. The march of human progress is largely dependent on the easy availability of fuel. The easy availability of LPG would effectively halt the felling of trees for firewood and preserve our forest cover and environmental balance. Besides, cooking gas in our kitchens reveals a sign of socio-economic progress. Therefore, there is a great scope for private participation in this vital sector

*At the inauguration of the Fuel Storage Terminal of EIPL, Visakhapatnam (November 1998).

of our economy. We have realised the handicaps of the control regime and so embarked on an ambitious reform programme to restructure our economy in tune with the dynamics of the world economy. This has thrown open plenty of opportunities for foreign investment in India.

In this context, I am proud to say that Andhra Pradesh is fast emerging as an important destination of foreign investment. Andhra Pradesh comes first in the alphabetical list of States in India. But our dynamic Chief Minister is determined to make it first in terms of all round development as well. In this context, he has initiated many novel programmes to improve infrastructural facilities which are so essential for rapid industrial growth. Already, Andhra Pradesh is surging ahead as a pioneer in the sphere of information technology and software industry. It is our long cherished dream to see that this State stands as a model of excellence for others to emulate. Today, we are very close to realising our dream as our State stands as the second most favoured destination for private investment after Maharashtra. With reforms in the power sector, transport sector and in administration yielding tangible results, we will be in the forefront of India's march into the next millennium to find a place of honour in the Asian resurgence.

The East India Petroleum Ltd. is an important milestone in our ambitious journey into the future. I am sure Mr. Klaver and his company are satisfied with the response from their Indian partners. I hope this will lead to greater involvement of the SHV Energy India Ltd. in accelerating the infrastructural development of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh and India. I congratulate Mr. Klaver on selecting a duo of dynamic and youthful entrepreneurs and wish them all the best for the growth of a long relationship of mutual trust and benefit between SHV and East India Petroleum Ltd.

I would like to thank all the well wishers for the honour done to me.

Thank you.

ROADS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

I am happy to be here with you all today. I am happy not merely because I have been invited to lay the foundation stone of the Gudihathnoor bridge and a bye-pass road on this National Highway but more importantly because I myself hail from a rural area and I know very well the importance of transportation *vis-a-vis* rural development.

Since time immemorial, some mode of transport has endowed mobility to the masses in pursuance of their socio-economic desires. Among all modes of transport, roads have a crucial role to play in the economic and social development of a country. In fact, road transport is an essential part of the basic infrastructure of economic development. It helps not only the growth of industry, agriculture, trade and commerce, but also the socio-economic goals of development. In a way, roads and highways act as essential arteries of economic activity. The road transport system is both a major component of the national economy and an important factor in shaping our life style, community development and Industrial growth patterns.

An efficient transport system is a vital input in the economic growth of all nations, particularly the developing countries. It provides the way for effective mobilisation of the country's resources and helps achieve the objectives of development plans. A well developed system of transport, facilitating the movement of men and materials, is instrumental for increasing the levels of production, distribution and consumption, thereby accelerating the process of economic growth. That is why it is generally accepted that planning for the removal of rural poverty and unemployment has to begin with planning for the development of transport and communication facilities in the villages, since, in their absence, development would not be possible.

The importance of developing national highways in a country like ours can hardly be over-emphasized. We are almost a continent, geographically.

*At the laying of the Foundation Stone of Gudihathnoor Bridge and Bye-Pass Road, Adilabad Dist. (September 1998).

Unless and until we develop and strengthen an effective transport system, we cannot develop economically. It is in view of this that we have to lay stress on developing adequate infrastructure for the growth of the transport sector by way of roads, bridges, highways and bye-pass roads. It is essential that adequate financial allocation be made in respect of this critical sector. Andhra Pradesh is a large State through which crisscross national highways which link the State with the rest of the country. Our State is also endowed with rivers and canals. Andhra is a vast market and it is also at once a meeting point of many cultures. This being so, it is all the more essential that the State is linked in a more organised way with the rest of the country. And I am sure this bridge in Gudihathnoor and the bye-pass road alongside will go a long way in building linkages with the rest of the State and the country. I hope that the work on these two projects would be completed well in time.

Thank you.

DRINKING WATER MANAGEMENT — NEED FOR A NATIONAL POLICY*

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to inaugurate the water supply scheme covering Ajithsinghnagar and Payakapuram.

It is a stark reality that due to widespread urbanisation, the cities and towns have reached a stage where they find it extremely difficult to cater to the water requirements of their residents. The need for providing them with basic amenities calls for planning on a large scale. I am happy to note that the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation is taking pains to relocate the people who have been evicted from the road sides and other areas in the city and extending to them some basic facilities.

In this context, one of the major problems faced by Municipal Corporations today is the task of supplying enough water to the ever-growing population. Water, which is considered to be the abode of Vishnu in our mythology, is vital to all forms of life. There is no life or human habitation in which man has not taken into consideration the proximity of water. Although water is abundant, covering three-fourths of the earth, it is a scarce resource. Of every 1000 gallons of water on earth, only 3 gallons is potable. The reckless use of water has strained its supply to the limits, especially in our cities. The developmental process, increase in population and the expansion of economic activities have inevitably led to an increase in the demand for water for diverse purposes, such as domestic, agricultural, recreational and industrial uses in general and for power generation in particular. What we see today is that easily accessible water resources have already been tapped, supplies are approaching their physical limits and new supplies for growing population and rising consumption levels are available only at a prohibitively increasing cost. With the indiscriminate proliferation of high rise buildings and the digging of deep tubewells in recent years, the ground water level in our cities

*At the inauguration of a Water Supply Scheme of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, Andhra Pradesh (19 February 1999).

is falling alarmingly. Hence, proper planning and resource management are of vital importance.

We Indians are fortunate in having been blessed with larger river systems which have been traditionally revered. Renewable water resources in our country are about 4 per cent of the global whole. The drinking water requirements of most of the cities in India are met from irrigation reservoirs, multi-purpose schemes existing in nearby areas and even by long distance transfer. As per official projections, by 2050 A.D., the population of India will be about 1.5 to 1.8 billion. Limited water resources and growing demand give rise to an urgent need for efficient planning. In such a scenario, it is imperative to undertake programmes of water resources appraisal, conservation and management.

I would once again like to compliment the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation authorities for making strenuous efforts towards extending basic amenities like water supply to the people of the resettlement and rehabilitation colonies. The Corporation's endeavours to extend the Krishna waters to Ajithsinghnagar and Payakapuram areas are, indeed, praiseworthy. I understand that considerable work has been done in constructing filtration plants and laying necessary pumping mains, distribution reservoirs and requisite pipelines. I would urge the authorities to make sure that properly treated water is made available to the people. Considering that drinking water has to be clean and safe, periodic checking and proper upkeep and maintenance of water treatment plants are also necessary. In a State like ours which has been a victim of floods and droughts, access to potable water is a perennial problem. Contaminated or unsafe water, as you all know, is a grave health hazard. That being the case, authorities concerned must always keep a vigil to make sure that the water meant for people is hygienic, clean and safe.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this water supply scheme.

Thank you.

WATER RESOURCES OF THE WORLD — NEED FOR MANAGEMENT*

As we all know, water, a valuable natural resource, is a basic human need and a precious national asset. In the absence of water, no socio-economic developmental activities can take place. It is, therefore, essential that this scarce and precious resource is managed in such a way that our present and future needs are met to attain the desired socio-economic objectives of growth and prosperity on a sustainable and environmentally sound basis.

In all countries, the demand for water has risen several folds since the beginning of the century due to rapid population growth, urbanisation, industrialisation and rising standards of living. However, as a large segment of world's population lives in drought-prone countries and countries with moderate water resources, the number of regions of the world facing water scarcity is increasing day by day. The condition of big rivers, lakes and ponds in the world is becoming worse due to the adverse environmental impact of various developmental activities including that of flow of unregulated industrial and other wastes into the river. Therefore, we must, endeavour to rectify this situation by fostering constructive international cooperation in managing water resources to our mutual benefit.

In India, water resources development and management has been one of the major objectives of our planned economic development over the last five decades. We are among the frontline countries in the world in exploiting our river water resources. We have made a spectacular achievement in the management and development of our water resources, especially in respect of irrigation and hydro-power. We have overcome the "drought-famine" syndrome almost completely and the "rain-flood" syndrome considerably. Our irrigated area and food production have each gone up by four times. We have achieved self-sufficiency in foodgrains. We have succeeded in protecting

*At the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference on "Water : the means required to preserve, manage and make the best use of this essential resource for sustainable development", Moscow (6-12 September 1998)

over a third of the flood-prone areas of the country. Our hydro-power generation has multiplied by 25 times. Besides, we have been able to provide clean and safe drinking water for about 80 per cent of our people except in a few problem areas. This is indeed, no mean achievement for the second highest populated country of the world. However, we, feel that we have to further improve the management of our water resources to meet the growing demands of our people for diverse uses on a sustainable basis.

I am aware that in many developing countries a large number of people have access neither to safe drinking water nor to proper sewage system. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address these problems. While the countries concerned have to make their own efforts in this direction, the international community and more specifically the developed countries can play a very important role in this regard by providing financial and technological support to such countries and regions facing severe water scarcity as well as the resource and technology crunch. The countries concerned will have to undertake the necessary policy and programme initiatives, including the launching of educational programmes to make people understand the interlinkage between water, health and environment and evolve an appropriate legal and regulatory framework to develop, manage and conserve their water resources on sustainable basis. The price of water must be fixed in a manner that it meets the basic needs of the people, ensuring their right to have access to adequate clean and safe drinking water, and at the same time, reckoning the finite nature of water resources.

Besides, people must be made to understand the importance of saving water and also imbibe such values as may strengthen water saving culture. In this context, the media can play a significant role in promoting awareness about the need to preserve the fast depleting water resources.

Friends, our collective endeavours should be to work for establishing a system to fully develop and efficiently manage our scarce water resources with a view to achieving greater prosperity for the peoples of the world.

Thank you.

V

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALISM

FAITH IN GOD — PATH TO HAPPINESS*

It gives me great pleasure to share this platform with Rev. Brother Dinakaran and Rev. Brother Paul Dinakaran, who are household names among the Christians of Andhra Pradesh and I can say of our country as a whole. They are rendering yeoman's service to the poor people in distress and to those who have no source to fall back on for emotional and spiritual support during their hour of adversity. These Healing Festivals and Spiritual Sermons are being organised all over Andhra Pradesh to give a spiritually healing touch and to instil a sense of courage and confidence in the distressed.

Man is a happy and proud creature when the going is good. But, once bad times start, things look gloomy. Despondency and despair set in which make the sufferer lose heart and propel him sometimes to take to the path of evil and sin. It is at this critical moment that he needs saner counsel to see the brighter side of life by thinking in a positive direction on a note of hope. This is something we cannot do on our own and the inspiration for positive thinking has to come from mature men of vision who are spiritually endowed to think on a higher plane than ordinary mortals.

For those who are in distress, be it due to disease, despair or destitution, hope and faith are the best remedial medicine. For the victims of adversity, there is tomorrow, even if all else is lost. For the victims of ailments, the will to live is as important as the medicine they take. Mere medication is of no value if the sufferer is despondent. He needs to be reached emotionally through the heart and spiritually through the head to strengthen his fighting spirit and his will to survive. This is a message that cannot come from ordinary mortals. This message has to come from those who are engaged in the service of God.

When adversity attacks us we generally think of God, while we do not think about Him when we are all right. In adversity, we are suddenly reminded

*At the 'Good News and Healing Festival', Hyderabad (11 November 1998).

of all the wrong things we have done. We think that it is the wrath of God visiting us for our bad deeds and there is no escape from it and we have to suffer with a sense of resignation, etc. It is here that a spiritual message acts powerfully as a special medicine. A prayer, seeking God's forgiveness for our follies and foibles, can instil hope and faith in us. And faith works where even facts fail. That is why, it is essential to have faith in God, the Lord of our lives and the Saviour of our sins. It is human to err but divine to forgive. We can seek forgiveness only when we have complete faith in the divine power. Festivals like this reinforce our faith in God and keep us on the right path. That is why, so many people congregate at these sermons from far and wide to hear the good word and receive the holy blessings of Lord Almighty.

Rev. Brother Dinakaran and Rev. Brother Paul Dinakaran deserve our whole-hearted gratitude for the noble work they are doing selflessly and tirelessly, almost single handedly all over India and especially in Andhra Pradesh in spreading the noble words of God and instilling hope in thousands of people who are in dire straits. This is possible only for those who combine divinity and dynamism, worship and work, dedication, devotion and duty and above all, place other's good over self good. I pray to Lord Almighty for the very best for them in the service of mankind.

Our *Shastras* teach us that *manav seva* is *madhav seva*. By serving humanity, we serve divinity. It is a noble task which calls for a great commitment to the cause of mankind. In this endeavour, the Christian Missionaries are doing an excellent job by running educational institutions, hostels, hospitals, old age homes, etc. I convey my best wishes to them for success in all their future endeavours.

The mere presence of men with vision like Rev. Brother Dinakaran and Rev. Brother Paul Dinakaran is spiritually enriching and I am sure we are going home as happy human beings after listening to them and being with them, though for a very short duration. I am, indeed, very grateful for this golden opportunity to be with Rev. Brother Dinakaran and Rev. Brother Paul Dinakaran. My best wishes to all of you. May the blessings of God be with all of us.

Thank you.

MODERN TIMES AND SPIRITUAL VALUES*

I am glad to be here to join this holy gathering on the occasion of launching the 'Moral and Spiritual India Festival'. I must congratulate the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya on organising the Festival with the sole aim of serving the higher purpose of human life. I am pleased to see that Rajyogini Dadi Prakash Ji, Chief of Brahma Kumaris has kindly graced this occasion. It is our privilege to have her *Darshan* and to listen to her. I admire the Rajyoga Education and Research Foundation and the World Renewal Spiritual Trust for their most valuable association and co-operation in the organisation of this unique programme of exposing the field of higher learning of moral and spiritual values for the enlightenment of one and all.

Friends, the world today is longing for peace and tranquility. People are sick of violence and hatred. We are striving for a new world order where there would be no war and destruction. In fact, the theme of the festival — Moral and Spiritual India—has a universal relevance and, as such, there could be no better guide than the ethical and moral principles enunciated in the various religions prevalent in the world to guide mankind to right conduct. Every religion propagates the message of love and brotherhood. Those who are indifferent to the welfare of their fellowmen; those whose hearts are empty of love; those who do not nurture the feeling of brotherhood; and those who harbour hatred and resentment in their hearts, do not know the true meaning of religion. In fact, religion, as we all know, connotes the spirit of truth, love and service. The essence of all religions is true love and service to people. It is said that service to humankind is service to God. All religions preach the path to salvation. The essential quality lies in developing love towards not only human beings, but also other living beings. Religions show the path to see God in everything. They tell us that God is not anywhere outside, but within one's own self. It is only through yoga that one can practise to see God within oneself. Unless we constantly develop an awareness

*At the launching of the 'Moral and Spiritual India Festival' organised by the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Hyderabad (5 October 1998).

and recollection of the ideals towards which we are striving at, all our work will become a mere bondage. We should regard our work as the highest form of worship.

Friends, in fact, the best foundation over which an everlasting edifice of life can be built is virtue. Virtues, or as we may call them divine qualities, are universal in nature. Today, there is an urgent need to inculcate virtues to save society from degradation. We should acquire that knowledge which will enable us to grow into cultured citizens of the World. Culture is the key to peace, harmony and progress.

The message of the ancient seers and yogins, which is more relevant today than ever before, is the knowledge of India's most ancient system of yoga. This priceless treasure has been preserved for the benefit of mankind in acquiring a mastery over its body and mind and ultimately over all its environment. It is a perfectly practical system of self-culture for attaining the harmonious development of our body, mind, intellect and soul. I believe a new world order of love and sacrifice, of co-operation and brotherhood, and the realization of the ideals of moral perfection, can be attained by our willing allegiance to yoga.

I hope, the festival 'Moral and Spiritual India' will induce its participants and all its aspirants to delve deep into their hearts to know their true nature and the ultimate realities of life to give a new shape to their existence. No doubt, man has succeeded in changing the face of the world. But once he succeeds in changing himself, we will have the dream of a beautiful world true for all-fulfilled. By organising our inner resources, we can order our relationship with fellowmen and build up a society which is non-violent and non-exploitative. It is only the vision of the human race as one family which can save the world. I feel, there cannot be any higher ideal than service to humanity. I wish this unique festival all success.

VISION AND VALUES IN THE NEXT CENTURY*

I deem it a privilege to associate myself with the National Festival on Vision and Values for the twenty-first century, being organised by the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Hyderabad. I am delighted to know that the Vishwa Vidyalaya has taken up the challenging task of harnessing understanding and fostering a sense of togetherness and harmony among different faiths worldwide.

In no country has there been such an insistent search for human values as in India. For ages, thinkers and religious leaders, saints and sufis of our country have dwelt on the concept that this cosmos is one entity. They have placed before us the ideals of brotherhood of mankind and faith. It has been one of the characteristics of Indian thinking to recognise diversities of opinion and to find a synthesis in divergent elements of thought. Over the centuries, our spiritual leaders have carried the divine message of love and devotion, truth and tolerance, service and sacrifice and sowed the seeds of cultural unity and spiritual rejuvenation of India. It is such endeavours which form the basis of our spirit of tolerance. We have to ensure that narrow outlook and rigid concern with ritualism are replaced by a broad vision and true devotion to duty. In the years to come, aberrations like caste rigidity and religious fanaticism must yield place to a new social order based on values like truth, love, compassion, service and sacrifice.

Friends, there is a general feeling the world over that humankind is suffering from a serious value crisis. Today, qualities like simplicity, compassion and fellow-feeling sound obsolete and irrelevant in a world that has become materialistic in outlook. It is felt that we are living in violence-oriented times.

That being the case, it is time we paid attention towards the reformation of our society on the basis of certain universal human values. We should

*At the Conference on National Festival on Vision and Values for the 21st Century, Hyderabad (24 January 1999).

appeal for small vows and small renunciations from individuals. This step is extraordinarily simple, yet extremely significant. To cite an example, students can be asked to swear that they will not use unfair means in examinations or resort to violent agitations. These are simple commitments and simple vows. Yet, broadly perceived, these small commitments are gigantic contributions towards reshaping the entire society on the basis of universal human values. They pertain to noble ideals like rectitude, non-violence, tolerance, peace, love, brotherhood etc.

More than ever before, today the world needs the message of peace and compassion. Despite the spectacular progress in various fields, peace and harmony in their full sense still elude us. One of the stark realities of life is that divergence of views is handled by violent methods. A peaceful and just society can come into existence only by fostering a spirit of tolerance towards diversities and the age-old ideal of universal brotherhood. In this world, unity is achievable by learning to unite, in spite of differences rather than insisting on unity without differences.

It is a matter of grave concern that deviation from the natural order of things to the artificial and extremely materialistic concerns is destroying harmony in society. Therefore, there is, an imperative for a spiritual revival and imbibing human values to create a new world in the next century, where conscience prevails, where soul dominates body, where virtue eliminates vice and where truth triumphs over falsehood.

Friends, life is undergoing a great transformation due to the advances in science and technology. In this scenario, proper integration of *Dharma* and Science is essential for a harmonious development of the human personality. This is especially relevant in modern times when the developments in science and technology have empowered man enormously. The lack of wisdom about *Dharma* and the inappropriate use of advances in science and technology have, together increased man's sorrows by poisoning land, air, water and the environment as a whole. Today, there is a general feeling that human beings are afraid of nature, that they are afraid of their fellow human beings and not only that, they are in fact, afraid of themselves! We need spiritual leaders and organisations to help society in grappling with this pathetic situation.

Since ages, religion has been one of the most powerful agents for changing human attitude and behaviour. The coming century needs a worldwide campaign for moral reawakening with a few simple precepts which should be incorporated into our value system. A sense of trustworthiness, winning

confidence and generating a sense of affinity among the comity of nations are the imperative needs of our times. Let our vision in the coming century be world-embracing rather than be confined to ourselves!

My heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Hyderabad which has shouldered the onerous task of organising Fairs, Conferences, Seminars, Meditation Sessions and Cultural Programmes as part of the Festival. I am sure this Festival would be able to achieve its laudable objective of dedicating our lives to the service of mankind and society.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Festival and wish it all success.

Thank you.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION — A MEANS OF SELF-REALISATION*

It is indeed a great honour for me to associate myself with the Global Celebrations of the Age of Enlightenment Day of the Maharishi Vedic University. Today, the occasion is even more auspicious because it happens to coincide with the birthday of the Maharishiji. Incidentally, the day is auspicious for one more reason — that being the birthday of another great soul of India, Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda was a fountain-head of spiritual life who preached and practised universal humanism. He harmonised in himself, East and West, reason and faith and mundane concerns and spiritual values. Swami Vivekananda's genius reached such heights of versatility that whatever we may talk about him, we will hardly be able to make a proper evaluation of even a fraction of the manifold facets of his sublime personality. In recent times, His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has spread the message of India's heritage to the wider-world outside. The Maharishiji has beautifully evolved the characteristic messages of Swami Vivekananda. He has contributed substantially in reducing negativity and bringing up positivity through transcendental meditation — a practical aspect of a new science, the science of creative intelligence. At a time when contemporary philosophical thinking was dominated by negativism, Maharishiji's preaching of transcendental meditation revived and infused positivism, thus contributing immensely to humanity. Today, the experience of 40 years of imparting the tenets of transcendental meditation in the East and the West, with more than 60 thousand teachers, has inspired us to conceptualize the vision of an ideal society — a society which will be free from disease, deprivation and despair. These issues, over a period, have evolved beyond the realms of wishful thinking into a scientific reality.

*On the occasion of the Global Celebrations of the Age of Enlightenment Day at the Maharishi Vedic University, the Netherlands (12 January 1999).

Transcendental meditation is being practised by 6 million people all over the world. It transforms a tiny finite individual into a big universal individual. All these experiences are imbibed in our Vedic literature. Maharishiji made us believe that the Vedas can be explained in terms of science and I congratulate the scientists, especially the physicists, who have been able to explain all that pure knowledge which is the knowledge of the entirety of life. We have come to a point where the most private and the most intimate experiences of pure consciousness are explained by science, by the objective approach to knowledge. Yoga—the science of creative intelligence — has glorified the scientific age into the age of enlightenment.

Friends, the relevance of the teachings and ideas of His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi can hardly be over-emphasised in the context of the contemporary society. At a time when the world is at the cross-roads, when unbridled materialism is on the ascendancy and when there is a perceptible decline of spiritual and moral values, the need of the hour is to practise Maharishiji's transcendental meditation. India has always been a beacon to humanity groping in search of peace of mind and spiritual bliss. Our seers and savants have shown the world the right path for spiritual salvation.

Today, on this solemn occasion, we fervently pray that God may give His Holiness the Maharishiji good health and long life so that we may continue to benefit from his ideas and teachings.

With these words, I thank the organisers for the cordial invitation extended to me to be associated with this function. I wish the Global Celebrations a grand success.

Thank you.

SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM*

I am, indeed, happy to be here amidst you at the launching of this massive project, 'Entering into Golden Era through Spiritual Empowerment'. As we are about to enter the next millennium, we should equip ourselves with new values to build a better world. And therefore, it is very significant that this project is being taken up by the Brahmakumaris at this particular juncture.

The contemporary world has achieved a tremendous degree of material prosperity and technological advancement but suffered a certain erosion of values in the spiritual realm. Consequently, material progress has made life comfortable and yet it has not succeeded in bringing happiness to our lives. Of what use will knowledge be, if it does not make life happy? But that is the reality of our times. We are more knowledgeable today, we are more advanced today and more prosperous than at any previous time in history. Yet, there is no sense of self-fulfilment or a sense of satisfaction. We are driven by a 'survival urgency syndrome' in every walk of life, notwithstanding all that we have achieved so far.

The reason for this situation is that mankind has compromised on certain fundamental principles and values in the process of acquiring wealth and all round material progress. Today, we have a great deal of knowledge in our heads, but no happiness in our hearts. There is a constant tension in our heads and we are at the crossroads as the millennium draws to a close. To overcome this sad situation, we must tread the right path and strive to build a world that is kind and humane. But we cannot achieve that goal with our present bent of mind. It is necessary to purge the mind and liberate it from the prejudices and weaknesses that have corrupted it and caused the present spiritual crisis.

*At the launching of a Project, "Entering into Golden Era through Spiritual Empowerment," Mount Abu, Rajasthan (24 June 1999).

This calls for an earnest endeavour to create a value-based society that can strive for a life of moral rejuvenation and spiritual reorientation. The need of the hour is not to shun material well-being nor to ignore the spiritual base of our existence but to achieve a balance, whereby mankind can take care of its basic needs and live a life of ethical uprightness and spiritual fullness. The question before us is how to achieve a state of mind that is wedded to build a brave new social order on the foundation of a lasting value system. This is an area in which we need the guidance of spiritual organisations to help us undertake an exercise of introspection into our lives and into the world around us in order to understand ourselves better. It is out of such introspection and an enlightened understanding of the self that a resolve can come about to strive for a better world.

There were people in the past who strived hard to create moral awakening and spiritual rejuvenation. The names of Dayanand Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and Swami Vivekananda come to one's mind immediately. They worked with a missionary zeal and yet the spirit of their message did not reach the ordinary man. It is here that we must take care to see that spiritualism is not monopolised by educated, westernised, well-off middle classes of our society. We cannot create a spiritual society with a majority of the people not being aware of what spiritualism is all about. This requires the spread of education and the eradication of poverty, ignorance, despair and destitution. In other words, the surest way to achieve spiritual awakening is by bringing about basic material progress. We cannot preach to a hungry man the need for values in life. His immediate need is to satiate his hunger. Feed him first and preach to him next and he will listen. That means man's basic needs must be taken care of before making him a spiritual being.

At the same time, we must remain constantly conscious of the fact that in our search for material well-being, we must not lose track of our essential quest for spiritual progress. We must also realise that spiritualism and ritualism are two entirely different things. As I said earlier, the modern man is always on the run, driven as he is by a 'survival urgency syndrome'. In our haste, we tend to think that by observing a few rituals, we can achieve spiritualism and realise divinity. We must come out of this mode of thinking. There is no short-cut to spiritualism. Breaking of coconuts or shaving off our heads at holy shrines do not make us spiritualistic.

Spiritualism is a constant endeavour, a ceaseless quest for truth, beauty and bliss in the noblest sense of the words. This quest must be combined with the need to earn a righteous living. When we succeed in this mission,

the result would be a blissful life, a peaceful society and a stable world based on moral values and ethical uprightness. While we can pursue material goals with our qualifications and competence, we need guidance in the spiritual realm. It is here that spiritual organisations like the Brahmakumaris have a great role to play in strengthening our moral resolve to lead a life of righteousness.

I am happy that this organisation is launching this massive project to usher in a new era of spiritual rejuvenation. I wish them mega success in their endeavour.

Thank you.

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDAJI — A LIFE OF NOBILITY*

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to join this august gathering of devotees to welcome revered Ranganathanandaji Maharaj to Hyderabad for the first time after he adorned the holy office of the President of the Ramakrishna Mission, an institution which knows no boundaries and embraces people the world over. This is not the first time that we have had the proud privilege of receiving the blessings of Swamiji. Earlier, when Swamiji was the head of the Ramakrishna Mission in Hyderabad, we had the fortune of his spiritual guidance for about two decades.

It is a fact that the Ramakrishna Mission has emerged as an eminent spiritual order in the modern world—be it in the form of the social and humanitarian services it renders, or be it in the nature of its stress on the practice of true religion and the development of noble character, or be it in the nature of its endeavours to root human beings in the ideals of rectitude, renunciation and service. Swamiji joined this order when he was merely eighteen and followed the ideal of renunciation and service by leading a pure life as a *sanyasi* devoted to prayer, meditation, intense study and service, all in the name of divine worship.

Great are the ways of worship of the revered saints of our country. Their services to mankind are so varied and vital and their renunciation so perfect and pronounced that they live and act with a vanished self. Swamiji has devoted the whole of his life to this Mission in the service of mankind by recognising the hidden divinity in every human being. By his example, he has shown us vividly the ways of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and the Holy Mother for realising the God in man. The essence of their message that 'we should not merely serve people but worship them; and service when done with reverence becomes worship', will perhaps leave no soul untouched when lesser mortals like us come into contact with noble souls like the Swamiji. He is a great scholar who attained the erudition to present us with the crux of our ancient philosophies in simple ways and easy words.

*At the Civic Reception accorded to Ranganathanandaji Maharaj by the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad (7 March 1999).

Swamiji has the distinction of serving the Mission in India and abroad in various capacities. He has served the Mission Centre at Rangoon and was Head of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in Karachi. As Secretary of the New Delhi Centre, Swamiji built a large library and auditorium, a text book library for university students and a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji's contribution as Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Calcutta and as Director of its School of Humanistic and Cultural Studies and Editor of its monthly bulletin are no less remarkable. He has also served for many years with distinction as a member of the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with the UNESCO.

Swamiji's is a many splendoured personality. A versatile speaker, he has lectured extensively before national and international audiences. Swamiji undertook several round-the-world lecture tours speaking at universities, colleges, schools, cultural institutions and other bodies on spiritual and cultural subjects. If devotees present here go through his discourses on contemporary problems and juxtapose them with his ennobling views on the eternal human values and the Vedantic concept of the divinity of man, they would certainly find a wonderful blend of ancient and modern thought. Appreciating his contribution towards national integration in all its various aspects and his noble role as an integrator of mankind far and wide, Swamiji was most appropriately conferred the first Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration in 1985. In spite of his busy schedule, Swamiji has found time to write extensively on subjects as varied as education, children and women in relation to society and humanity and on practical Vedanta and the Science of Values.

Throughout his life, an abiding faith in the timeless values of humanity has been found strongly linked with the Swamiji's love of service. Whether it was the Bengal famine of 1943 or the suffering of the people in the wake of the partition of Bengal or during times of natural calamities, Swamiji has always been in the forefront to help the distressed and the dispossessed. The Vivekananda Institute of Education and Culture, the Vivekananda Health Centre and the Holy Temple of Sri Ramakrishna devoted to this city of Hyderabad speak for his love of service and the heartfelt compassion for mankind. The people of Andhra Pradesh acknowledge with gratitude the services rendered by the revered Swamiji in organising various rural development programmes in many of our villages.

We must all earnestly pray to the Lord for many more fruitful years to the divine life of Swamiji, so that we may continue to be guided by this great saint in our endeavours for the service of society, for the service of the nation and for the progress of mankind as a whole.

Thank you.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIAL SERVICE*

It is indeed a matter of great pleasure for me to be with you today, sharing the joy of your Navathi celebrations. In fact, coming to the beautiful "God's own land" of Kerala is itself a very pleasant experience. With so many religious places and centres of pilgrimage around, the whole region appears to have an aura of spirituality about it.

A few weeks back, I have had another opportunity to experience and share the piety, enthusiasm, spirit of religious fervour and co-existence of the people of Kerala when I was here to pay obeisance to Lord Ayyappa in Sabarimala. My visit here today is yet another pilgrimage for me. To my mind, all religions exist for the same purpose. Human well being is the ultimate and common aim of all religions.

Christianity in Kerala, unlike in any other part of the country, is deep rooted in the Indian soil as it legitimately claims for itself a tradition of nearly 2000 years. Your Christian tradition is, in fact, older than that of even some of the European countries. As our philosopher statesman Dr. Radhakrishnan said, 'Christianity today has got not merely the rights of a guest but that of a native.'

When Saint Thomas, the Apostle, introduced Christianity to India, he was not bringing just another religion to this land of ancient civilization and vibrant culture, but the noble ideology of Christianity with its emphasis on peace, love and tolerance. The Church, with its ability to assimilate itself with the culture and ethos of India and its willing identification with the soil of India, has helped to further enrich this great civilization. The thousands of educational institutions, hospitals, health centres, homes for the aged, the destitute and the terminally ill, established through the length and breadth

*At the Navathi Celebrations of the Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Students Movement of India, Pathanamthitta, Kerala (30 December 1998) (*read out in absentia*).

of India, especially in the tribal and other remote areas, stand as a lofty testimony to the good work various Christian denominations have been doing in our country.

All these have been accomplished not through the organised Church alone; the lay organisations have also been playing an active role in this. The Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Students Movement of India, I understand, has been contributing in very many ways towards finding meaning and content to Christian life in Kerala. I was quite impressed, reading about the objectives and activities of this Movement, about the varied opportunities it offers to students for the integral development of their personality and about the impact it has been making on the society at large.

A small idea of 1908 has today grown into a powerful movement spanning across this State and even outside its boundaries. Nine decades, I must say, is a long period in the history of a movement or an association. During this period, you have got many achievements to be proud about. It is in such proud assessment and introspection that the values and relevance of any institution for a society are to be gauged.

A movement like this, centered as it is around our institutions of learning, plays a greater and lasting role in society. It is the values you imbibe in the institutions of learning and the priorities you set for yourselves as the youth force that shape the future of any society. The French philosopher and writer Victor Hugo said, 'he who opens a school closes a prison'. My learned friends here would know how many prisons have thus been closed on their initiatives. It is only by blending spirituality and science that we can produce better human beings. As the old saying goes, "you educate your children without religion, you will be producing clever devils". This is where the significance of Christian education lies for our country. Your educational institutions have stood as pioneering centres of learning with the right mixture of spirituality and science. This beautiful campus itself stands as a testimony to this.

Friends, it is said of all kinds of movements that first it is some visionary leaders who launch and guide them, but later the movements themselves are expected to produce leaders to guide them. Today, as you celebrate your Navathi, you can definitely be proud of your contributions all these years to enrich the socio-political, educational and cultural life of our society, especially in Kerala. Indian Christianity as such and your movement in particular have the innate potential and ability to do much more for our society. It must be the endeavour of Indian Christianity today to help change the attitude of mutual antagonism prevailing among people of different religions, to instil the spirit of brotherhood and peace in our society and thereby strengthen our

secular social fabric. There is a special challenge and an opportunity today before the Christian community to help everybody experience the peace and love that Christ's birth brought to the world. I hope and pray that the Navathi celebrations of the Orthodox Christian Students Movement may inspire every one associated with it in realising these objectives.

I would also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to His Grace Philipos Mar Eusebius Metropolitan and all the others associated with these celebrations for giving me an opportunity to be associated with this function today and for being with the people of Kerala. I wish the very best to all of you in all your endeavours. Before I conclude, I would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year.

Thank you.

VI

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ENGINEERS — THE BACKBONE OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me pleasure to be here amidst you to take part in your celebration of the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence. The fact that we are honouring some of the eminent engineers makes the occasion all the more pleasurable.

Engineers are the backbone of a country's economic development and technological advancement. Much of the development in the West is due to the excellence they have achieved in various spheres of engineering. We have realised this early enough as an independent nation. This realisation is well reflected in the vision of Pandit Nehru who wanted to lay a strong industrial foundation for India's economic development. That vision resulted in the setting up of major industries in the core sector such as iron and steel, coal, power generation, oil refineries, etc., which were necessary to build a strong infrastructure for further industrial development.

As a further step in that direction, many engineering colleges, including IITs, have been set up to train young men into engineers. These colleges have produced some of the best brains in various spheres of engineering and they took the initiative to build the nation industrially. But it was not an easy task in a country which was impoverished by long years of exploitative alien rule. The economy was emaciated due to the War to which India was made a party without its consent.

Therefore, at the dawn of our Independence, the country was in a shambles. The cottage industries, for which India was famous, were systematically ruined by the manufactured goods, mass produced in Britain. No attention was paid to the development of industries in India except those that suited the colonial convenience of our alien rulers. In this context, we must remember the great endeavours of the Tatas in the steel sector and Sir Arthur Cotton in the sphere of irrigation. While Jamshedji Tata showed

*At the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Independence organised by the Institution of Engineers (India), Vijayawada (12 July 1998).

dynamism in setting up a native steel mill in pre-Independence India, Sir Arthur Cotton showed an extraordinary vision in turning the mighty Godavari from a source of sorrow into liquid gold by building a hitherto unknown irrigation system in the Godavari delta region. His vision has transformed this area into a veritable rice bowl of India and in the process he became a deity of the delta.

An engineer of a similar calibre was born on this soil and he is none else than Kanuru Lakshamana Rao, popularly known as Dr. K.L. Rao, an engineer of great distinction, eminent parliamentarian and able administrator. It is appropriate that we are holding this function in the town of Dr. K.L. Rao whose endeavours bore rich fruits to the nation in the sphere of irrigation and power generation. It is people like him who inspired our generation to strive for excellence through sweat and toil, through grit and grim determination. There were no resources to build upon but only a rock like resolve emanating from the patriotic fervour of the new found Independence.

Standing up firmly against all odds, our engineers have created a proud legacy by making India one of the top ten industrialised nations of the world. A great deal of progress has been achieved in various spheres of engineering due to your dedication and excellence. But paradoxical it may sound though, we are among the poorest countries having the largest unlettered population in the world. We have to go a long way in developing basic infrastructure like transport, telecommunications, power, etc. which are the lifelines of the industrial development of a country.

In this context, we have to develop technologies appropriate to our specific needs. For example, we have a vast supply of cheap labour. We must devise such technologies that would absorb the labour gainfully in the productive process.

There is a tendency to concentrate industries at one place. While this may lead to economies of scale, it also leads to an uneven economic development, in turn leading to regional imbalances and environmental degradation. The engineering community must become conscious of the perils of upsetting the environmental balance in the name of development. This is not to say that development must be halted to save environment. However, there is a persistent need to strike a harmony between the two.

The State of Andhra Pradesh has come to the forefront of industrialisation in recent years. Our youthful and dynamic Chief Minister is creating the right ambience and infrastructure for the development of an industrial base, particularly information technology, which can take the State to a higher

stage of economic development. Also, many engineering colleges have come up in recent years in our State. This should hopefully lead to a mini-industrial revolution in the State for which guidance and blessings of the eminent engineers who have gathered here would be necessary.

I am glad that today we are honouring some of the tallest names in the world of engineering in Andhra Pradesh. I congratulate them whole-heartedly and wish them long years of active and enterprising life. I congratulate the Institution of Engineers India, Vijayawada branch for the initiative they have taken in this regard and wish them the very best in all their endeavours.

Thank you.

TELECOM — LIFELINE OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION*

It gives me great pleasure to be with you all today. It is, indeed, a proud day for all those who have been associated with this prestigious project. I understand that this Electronic Telephone Exchange is built up at a cost of Rs. 2.11 crore and I am particularly happy to know that the new Exchange would provide an extra capacity of 700 lines immediately and will give another 700 lines later on.

If we take a cursory glance at the onward march of civilization, we would see that of all the disciplines of science, it is perhaps communication and information technology which have had the maximum impact on human development. Needless to say, remarkable strides in the telecom technology are rapidly changing every aspect of our life and times by breaking old barriers and building new bridges of interaction.

I would like to stress that a modern communication system is a powerful tool in nation-building, especially in a developing country like ours. It facilitates in spreading new ideas and helps in bringing people together. It also plays a vital role in the transformation of traditional societies into modern ones. As you know, the whole process of development revolves around people's participation in the developmental programmes. As such, an improved and effective communication network is indispensable for involving and begetting popular participation for a meaningful implementation of national policies and programmes.

Thus, we need to have an efficient and well developed communication system, particularly telecommunications. It is a fact that in recent years, our telecommunication system has improved substantially, particularly in the urban centres. But what is more important is that the reach of our telecom network must spread beyond the metropolitan cities and urban centres to the remote areas as nearly three-fourths of our population live in the villages.

*At the inauguration of an Electronic Telephone Exchange at Hanuman Junction, Krishna Dist., Andhra Pradesh (28 December 1998).

To my mind, a fully functional rural communication system would provide the necessary connectivity to remote rural areas and integrate them with the rest of the country. Here, it needs to be emphasised that a better rural communication network is an essential part of infrastructural development. This is particularly so in places which are prone to natural calamities. With efficient rural communications, our administration will also be better-equipped to take care of emergent situations.

It is precisely for this reason that the telecommunication sector has been given a very high priority in our developmental schemes. This crucial sector has achieved a phenomenal growth since Independence. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and its constituent organisations have been earnestly trying to upgrade and expand the telecom network.

The expansion of telecommunication facilities in rural areas has been one of the foremost objectives of the DoT. The DoT's achievements over the past fifty years include the growth of telephone exchanges from 321 in April 1948 to more than 21000 in January 1997 and an increase in the number of telephone connections from eighty-two thousand to over 130 lakhs during the same period. By March 1998, we had 23406 telephone exchanges spread across the country.

As part of the objective of connecting all the villages with telephone facilities, we have launched an intensive drive by improving the quality of existing services and facilitating accessibility to telecommunication services in the rural and semi-urban areas. In its modernisation endeavours, the DoT has inducted digital electronic exchanges in the network, both for expansion and replacement of old electro-mechanical type of exchanges.

As we approach the next millennium, momentous changes are taking place in the areas of information and communication. The existing networks are giving way to integrated, inter-connected and interactive, multi-media networks of the future. And, in our country, if this revolution in communication technology has to reach its culmination, it is imperative that rural India is not left out in this onward march.

It is a matter of utmost pride to all of us that the State of Andhra Pradesh under our dynamic Chief Minister Shri Chandrababu Naidu is in the forefront of the campaign to promote the use of information and communication technology in various governmental activities. Communication and information technology can play a pivotal role in bringing added coherence into the planning and implementation of various governmental initiatives. Recognising this, the Union Government has taken due note of the information

and communication revolution that is sweeping the globe. We are particularly delighted that the National Task Force on Information Technology which is entrusted with the task of formulating the National Informatics Policy is co-chaired by our Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Chandrababu Naidu.

Friends, I am sure, with the opening and modernisation of more and more rural exchanges, we will be able to rectify the imbalance in our telephone system which has so far been too much weighed towards urban areas. The Commissioning of this Electronic Exchange at Hanuman Junction will provide the people of the area with an opportunity to interact and integrate with the rest of the State and the wider world out there.

I heartily congratulate and compliment the organisers and all those who have been associated with this project. I thank all of you for inviting me here and enabling me to share my views with you. Before I conclude, I would also like to wish all of you a very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Thank you.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY — THE MANTRA OF DEVELOPMENT*

It gives me immense pleasure to be associated with the inaugural function of the 41st Annual Technical Convention of the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers(IETE) on 'Information Technology'.

I am happy to know that the IETE, which is an eminent institution of professional education in our country, is hosting this Convention on the occasion of the conclusion of the year-long Silver Jubilee celebrations of its Hyderabad Centre. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my heartiest congratulations to the Chairman and other members of the organising committee, academics, engineers, students and all others belonging to the fraternity of the IETE.

Ever since its inception in 1953, IETE has been rendering yeoman service to the country by devoting itself to the propagation and advancement of science and technology in the fields of information, electronics and telecommunications. In the process, it has established itself as a leading professional institution. The IETE has been maintaining national standards for different levels of professionals in the related areas. Through its 35 centres and sub-centres spread all over the country and one in Kathmandu, the IETE has been imparting technical education and training to thousands of students, engineers and professionals, thereby creating new and challenging career opportunities, especially for our youth. Besides, it facilitates inter-disciplinary interaction among professionals, individuals, industries and scientific and research organizations from India and abroad. This approach is, indeed, laudable. It helps in the continuous upgradation of knowledge about the latest developments in technology.

*At the inaugural function of the 41st Annual Technical Convention on 'Information Technology' and the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Hyderabad Centre of the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers, Hyderabad (26 September 1998).

Friends, we are living in an era of information explosion and we are fully conscious of the value of this important resource. This factor is influencing and shaping the lives of people the world over. No country can afford to neglect the developments taking place in information technology. Today, every country is making efforts for collecting, storing and disseminating information to the users for its overall development. Information technology has become an essential input for finding solutions to various problems, especially in the developing countries. Now, it is universally accepted that a country which is advanced in information technology can manage its human and natural resources to its advantage effectively and efficiently and lead its people on the path of progress and development.

The main thrust of information technology, which comprises two major components, namely computers and telecommunications, should be to economise time, space and cost of storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. The advances made in communication and information technology have opened new vistas for the developing countries. We must, therefore, endeavour to make use of the advances in technology for storage of information, improving the means of transmission and ensuring quick and accurate access.

We are facing multifarious problems like rapid growth of population, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, environmental degradation, etc. In our efforts to study and solve these problems, we must make the optimum use of information technology. Through prudent application of information technology, we can uplift millions of our people from the throes of poverty, disease and ignorance and improve their standard of living in rural as well as urban areas.

Friends, in recent years, we have made tremendous progress in the field of information technology. At present, India is a leading exporter of computer software in the world. Besides, we have one of the largest skilled manpower in this area. In our Ninth Five Year Plan, greater emphasis is laid on the development of infrastructure for information technology. I feel this would enhance our competitiveness and give a further boost to exports in this area.

It is, indeed, a matter of happiness that our Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Chandrababu Naidu has accorded great importance to information technology. As a result, Hyderabad is going through a sea-change. The on-going construction of the prestigious Hi-tech City, the establishment of the Indian Institute of Information Technology and the setting up of Software Development Centres will add new feathers to the cap of Hyderabad and place it on the IT map of the world.

In the context of economic liberalization, I am sure this Convention will provide an important forum where eminent experts, engineers and academics from all over the country will interact and share their ideas and experiences. This will enable them to face the challenges in their respective areas of specialization and help them in finding solutions to the problems faced by the country.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the 41st Annual Technical Convention of the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers. I wish its deliberations all success.

Thank you.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION — NEED FOR COMPETITIVE EDGE*

I am happy to be amidst you today and it gives me great pleasure to lay the foundation stone of the YVS and BRM Memorial Polytechnic at Mukteshwaram. I am sure this Polytechnic, when it comes up, will play an important role in providing technical education to the students belonging to this area and help them in building their careers.

Friends, it is indeed a matter of deep satisfaction that there has been a phenomenal expansion in the field of technical education over the last five decades in the country. This is because of the fact that in our planning strategies, we have given great importance to scientific and technical education. As a result, India has a large professional and technical manpower today. Our technical and skilled manpower has become our biggest asset which is at par with international standards. Our technicians and engineers leave their mark wherever they work. I am sure this would help us in achieving high economic growth and prosperity for the common man.

In order to make our engineers and technicians to compete with the best in the world, it is necessary that greater emphasis should be given to the quality aspect of technical education. For achieving this objective, our polytechnics and other technical institutions should adopt the latest, updated and innovative methods in imparting education and training. It is also equally important that such institutions should interact with industries and cater to their needs. This approach would help not only in creating more and more employment opportunities for the youth but also enhance the competitive edge of our industry.

Today, India is in the process of a socio-economic transformation. We are faced with problems like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

*At the function to lay Foundation Stone of the YVS and BRM Memorial Polytechnic, Mukteshwaram, East Godavari Dist. (16 August 1998).

Such problems require the attention of every right thinking citizen of our society. Our intellectuals, judges, educationists, planners, social scientists and parliamentarians should play a crucial role in providing guidance to our youth, so that they may successfully face the challenges ahead.

With these words, I am happy to lay the foundation stone of the YVS and BRM Memorial Polytechnic. I congratulate its management on this occasion and wish them all success in their endeavour.

Thank you.

SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION — NEED FOR EXCELLENCE*

I have great pleasure in associating myself with the inauguration ceremony of Sir Mokshagundam Visveswaraya Bhawan at the Gandhi Institute of Technology and Management today. Let me thank the organisers for inviting me to inaugurate the newly constructed Bhawan named after Sir Visveswaraya, a legendary engineer, eminent administrator and great statesman of our times, and affording me an opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

First of all, I feel proud in saying that Sir Visveswaraya was a son of this soil in the sense that his family originally belonged to Mokshagundam village in Andhra Pradesh. Later, the family migrated to Nandi Hills in the erstwhile Mysore State where Visveswaraya was born on 15 September 1861. After obtaining his Engineering degree and serving in various Government Departments of the then Bombay Province with distinction, he ultimately came back to the Mysore State as Chief Engineer. As Chief Engineer, he was responsible for the growth of industries and technical education in the State. The Krishnaraja Sagar Dam on the Cauvery river is an ample testimony of his technical genius and engineering skills. Subsequently, he rose to become Chief Minister (*Dewan*) of Mysore State in November 1912 and provided outstanding services to the State in that capacity till 1918 which ensured all round development of the Mysore State. Sir Visveswaraya died in 1962, having lived for over hundred years. For the invaluable contributions he made in different spheres not only in the service of the Mysore State but the entire country, he was awarded the highest civilian honour of the country, Bharat Ratna, in 1995.

The importance of education in life hardly needs any reiteration. Being the second most populous country of the world with a vast reservoir of human resource, India needs to have an effective system of education,

*At the function to inaugurate Visveswaraya Bhawan at GITAM Campus, Visakhapatnam (31 August 1998).

especially technical education which can become instrumental in solving its manifold problems like unemployment and providing for a better life to its people. I am of the firm belief that it is only through a meaningful vocationalisation of education at the senior secondary schools stage itself, that more and more job opportunities can be created and at the same time skilled manpower could be provided for effective utilisation in different spheres of national activity. It is only by realising this objective that our country can compete successfully at the global level and prove itself a worthy member of the comity of nations. Another advantage the growth of technical education can bring to our society is that it will prepare the student well for the world of work, so that he would not only be able to enhance his family income but also contribute with full might to the overall advancement of the society and the nation as a whole. It is here that the role of the institutions of technical education becomes important. I, indeed, feel happy in saying that the institutes of technical excellence like, the Gandhi Institute of Technology and Management are doing a commendable job in providing high quality technical education in disciplines like Engineering, International Trade and Management to students from all over the country. I am aware of the excellent work the Institute is doing for the last 18 years after making a humble beginning in 1980.

It is gratifying to note that during the nearly two decades of its existence, the Institute has made rapid strides. The newly constructed majestic building named after Bharat Ratna Sir Mokshagundam Visveswaraya is a living example of this progress. Located inside the sprawling 99 acre campus of the Institute, the Bhawan will constantly remind us of Sir Visveswaraya's greatness, intelligence, concern for educational advancement, administrative acumen and excellent grasp of matters connected with socio-economic transformation of the nation. He was known not only for his ideas but also for giving concrete shape to them and producing results.

Before concluding, I would like to congratulate the organisers for their achievements in the sphere of technical education. I do hope that the newly constructed Bhawan will help the Institute not only to increase seats in the existing courses but also to start new ones and accommodate more and more students. I take the opportunity to pay my respectful homage to this illustrious son of Mother India and wish the Institute success in all its ventures. I also wish the students a better and prosperous future.

Thank you.

INTERNET IN KONASEEMA*

At the outset, I would like to thank the Department of Telecom for giving me this opportunity to be amidst you at the commissioning of Internet service here. It is a matter of great privilege for this area that this is the first case where the Internet mode has been provided at a place other than district headquarters.

In a country like India, with its vast and fast growing population, low per capita income, high level of illiteracy, multiplicity of languages, life styles and cultures, the Internet service can be a powerful catalyst and a great harbinger of prosperity and a higher quality of life. Information technology has made great strides in its reach, variety, utility and penetration. It has brought change in our concepts of time and space to such an extent that these have virtually ceased to be impediments in the way of communication between man and man, society and society, and country and country. Everything appears to be a face-to-face and inter-personal communication on the net. The Internet has become a popular medium of communication all over the world in recent times because of its faster reach and wider range across the globe.

Friends, information technology is no substitute for developmental activities but it is increasingly being realised that it is a useful means to varied socio-economic ends. This realisation has inspired the Government of India and State Governments to make a new beginning in this area. We are happy that our State under the dynamic leadership of our Chief Minister is making tremendous progress in this area.

With this facility at Amalapuram, it will now be possible for the subscribers to enter into the domain of global information super highways. This service will provide customer access to Shell/TCP and IP. Shell access will facilitate character-oriented information access E-mail and file transfer facilities whereas

*At the function to inaugurate Internet facility, Amalapuram (28 March 1999).

TCP and IP access will provide extended facilities like OU1 and multimedia-based applications.

We must explore the opportunities to take full advantage of the Internet. This facility can play a significant role in revolutionising the communication facilities in this region, thereby enabling us to concentrate on developmental projects in a wider perspective. It will eventually translate into all-round growth and balanced development of the socio-economic fibre of society in this region.

I am very optimistic that the Internet service will bring about multi-faceted transformation in the socio-economic structure of society in the years to come. This new beginning in the Konaseema region should set the ball rolling for similar facilities in other places.

I would like to call upon the people and the policy makers to make the best use of this facility. New vistas of developmental planning based on globalised vision will definitely enable us to enter the new millennium with a sense of satisfaction and confidence.

Thank you.

COMMUNICATION NETWORK FOR SAARC*

SAARC is an integrative organisation. Under the umbrella of this institution, we have set for ourselves the goal of bringing about social, economic and cultural integration of the peoples of our region. The sinews of our bondage are our history, our present and our future. The historical factor is that we came under British rule and influence. Our present is dominated by common problems — illiteracy, poverty, disease, lack of capital and technology, and socio-economic inequities. Our future lies in seeking a common destiny.

In drawing lessons from our history, in facing challenges of the present and in shaping our future destiny, perhaps the most potent means is communication and exchange of information. In pursuing this means, we have the benefit of availability of sophisticated technologies in this point of time in human history. And for accessing these technologies, our strength is our people who are endowed with native intelligence, brilliance and industry.

The idea of technical cooperation, *inter alia*, in the area of communication was mooted at the very first SAARC Summit held in Dhaka in 1985. The Second SAARC Summit in 1986 at Bangalore, India, considered the idea of exchange of information. This idea widened the scope of collaboration in areas like broadcasting, rural development, academic exchanges and tourism. Last year, the Tenth SAARC Summit at Colombo, Sri Lanka set the agenda for communication and exchange of information among SAARC countries.

The problem before us is not scarcity of information but rather the plenty of it. Identification of information relevant and significant for our collective progress and communication of the same by the quickest and most orderly manner is the challenge that we need to address.

*On 'Communication and Exchange of Information' at the Third Conference of the SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, Dhaka, Bangladesh (19 March 1999).

Our region has a very vibrant print media. We are rather rich in terms of diversified newspapers, periodicals, books and publications. We should organise free flow of information, drawing upon this strength. There should be periodic exchange of editors and working journalists.

The news agencies in our region are very dynamic too. Interaction and cooperation between them can help our people in promptly accessing intra and extra regional information. It is needless for me to emphasise the need for reducing costs of communication and information exchange to mutually advantageous levels.

As important as the free flow of information is the free flow of people. Barriers inhibiting the movement of peoples amongst SAARC countries should be dismantled. Unhindered movement of people is what will give life, substance, realism and credibility to information flow.

There has been a revolution in the electronic media. In fact, air waves have rendered national boundaries unreal. Satellite transmission, cable technology and Direct to Home (DTH) services bring peoples across boundaries together including in real time. This electronic media revolution itself should be pressed into service as a force of South Asian integration. This effort should be supported by building up programme production capabilities within the SAARC countries. These programmes could cover the fields of education, grass-root experiences in agricultural and rural development, industries, poverty removal, cultural expositions, etc. In this context, it may be recalled that last year, India hosted a SAARC Multi-lingual and Multimedia Information Technology Conference. The recommendations of this Conference should be purposefully implemented. In particular, the SAARC Audio-Visual Exchange (SAVE) Programme inaugurated in 1987 should be enriched and developed further.

Between India and various other SAARC countries, significant developments in telecommunication linkages have already taken place. The existing telecommunication linkages have to be enhanced, minimising disparities within and between SAARC member countries. Complete digitalization of linkages needs special attention. Co-operation in telecommunication infrastructure and human resource development would also need to be strengthened.

SAARC parliamentarians would be doing a salutary service to their constituents if they specialize on the concerns of communication and information exchanges—particularly on technology induction for the purpose. The performance of our national Parliaments is itself a worthy subject for

communication and information exchange to strengthen the forces of democracy.

The *Parliament of India Home Page* on the World Wide Web Site of Internet became operational on 15 March, 1996. Constituent Assembly Debates, the Constitution of India, important Addresses, speeches and messages of the President to the nation (1996-97), Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, Directions by the Speaker, Decisions from the Chair, Bills and Policies (1991 onwards), Union Budgets (starting 1996-97), biodata of members of the Tenth, the Eleventh and the Twelfth Lok Sabhas, biodata of members of the current Rajya Sabha, Parliamentary Debates (Lok Sabha Debates beginning with the Tenth Lok Sabha in July 1991), and synopsis of the debates of the Special Session to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence (1997) constitute the major components of parliamentary information currently available on the Internet. Members of Parliament and others interested can access the Indian Parliament Web Site on the Internet.

The other SAARC Parliaments may also have become accessible on the Internet. We need to enlighten ourselves on our parliamentary democratic experiences on the Internet route.

Thank you.

VII

TRIBUTES TO NATION-BUILDERS

SARDAR PATEL — THE BUILDER AND CONSOLIDATOR OF MODERN INDIA*

It is indeed a great pleasure to welcome you here today on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, one of the greatest sons of Mother India. May I take this opportunity to thank the Respected Rashtrapatiji for having graced this occasion and unveiled the statue of Sardar Patel. I would also like to express our thanks to the Respected Up-Rashtrapatiji, Respected Pradhan Mantriji and other distinguished guests for being with us today.

Shri Ram Sutar has created this marvellous piece of art. I thank him and the Government of Gujarat which has donated this imposing statue of Sardar Patel.

It is indeed befitting that the statue of such a great son of India has been installed in the Parliament House. By installing this statue of Sardar Patel, we are honouring the memory of a great freedom fighter and a towering figure in modern Indian history who always worked for the socio-economic betterment of our people and gave his total service for the unity of our country.

Sardar Patel's role in our freedom struggle was of great importance. He gave to our freedom struggle a practical and organisational leadership. The Kheda *Satyagraha* which he organised in the year 1918 under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi brought out his sincere love for the farmers and workers of the country. Time and again, Sardar Patel displayed his outstanding organisational skill and the strength of his character. He was actively involved in the protests against the Rowlatt Act, and in the Non-Cooperation Movement. He was arrested several times for championing the cause of freedom from foreign rule. The Borsad *Satyagraha* and the Bardoli *Satyagraha* were striking

*At the unveiling of the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Parliament House Complex, New Delhi (14 August 1998).

examples of his close relationship with the masses. To Sardar Patel and the people, those were struggles for just causes and also a struggle of morality against oppression. The success of these peaceful and non-violent campaigns made him a natural leader respected and loved by one and all.

When Congress entered office at the Centre in 1946, Sardar Patel became the Home Minister of the country, a position he occupied after Independence too. He was also Independent India's first Deputy Prime Minister. It was left to him to consolidate the hard won freedom and ensure the unity and integrity of the nation.

Sardar Patel, with his complete understanding of men and matters, spared no effort to ensure that the merger of princely States took place as quickly and peacefully as possible. He dealt with the difficult question of princely States in a masterly manner and almost within a year, he redrew the map of India with such States joining the Indian Union. His greatness lay in the skill and smoothness with which he completed the task of merger. It was this remarkable achievement which made Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru appreciate him as "the builder and consolidator of New India."

Sardar Patel's political skill, capacity to judge people correctly, patriotism, practical wisdom, courage, and administrative efficiency made him a great statesman. A man of strong determination, iron will and clear vision, Sardar Patel left an everlasting impression of his remarkable personality on our country and its generations. The key to the Sardar's success in public life was his capacity to decide and fix clear cut objectives, to take the right decision at the right time and to find the right person to assist him in achieving the objectives.

The ideas and ideals held dear by Sardar Patel are as relevant and important in shaping the country's future today as they were in the past. Sardar Patel can be rightly called as one of the greatest builders of modern India. His life, ideals and contributions will continue to inspire and guide us and the generations to come to build a strong and prosperous India and to preserve and protect the hard-earned freedom and the unity of the country. It is only by strengthening the national fabric that we can repay our debt to Sardar Patel and all those who made great sacrifices for the national cause.

I am confident that the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the Parliament House Complex will be a source of inspiration and encouragement to all of us. A strong and united India will be the fittest memorial for Sardar Patel. On this occasion, let us resolve to always work together and succeed in building the India of Sardar Patel's dreams.

Thank you very much.

AMBEDKAR — ARCHITECT OF THE CONSTITUTION*

I am glad to be here amidst you all on this occasion of offering floral tributes to one of the illustrious sons of India, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. I thank the organisers for having invited me to this function to commemorate the 108th birth anniversary of our beloved Babasaheb.

Babasaheb, as he is known among millions of his admirers and followers, belongs to that galaxy of stalwarts who played a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of free India. His was indeed a multifaceted personality. He was a distinguished economist, a learned professor, a brilliant lawyer, a reputed author, an eminent parliamentarian and an architect of the Constitution of India. And he left an indelible imprint on various facets of our national life and polity.

The life of Dr. Ambedkar epitomised the relentless crusade against socio-economic injustice of every kind. He strived hard all through his life to strengthen the weakest link of the social chain, so that India could march forward with vigour to take her rightful place in the comity of nations. Independent India owes much to his vision of an egalitarian society and to his struggle for harmony. He set a personal example to show as to how, by having a firm faith in self-reliance and with courage of conviction, one could raise oneself to a life of purposive greatness and be a source of inspiration to others.

Friends, twenty-five centuries ago, Lord Buddha challenged the social divisions and said, "The only valid divisions are the divisions between those who are noble and those who are ignoble." Through the course of Indian history, great sages and saints exposed the hollowness and irrationality of superficial divisions and sought to bring various communities of India together in a creative partnership. Dr. Ambedkar also worked towards attaining the same objective by striving to achieve social cohesion and unity of the nation.

*At the function to commemorate the 108th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at Andhra Pradesh Bhavan, New Delhi (14 April 1999).

Dr. Ambedkar was a democrat to the core. Democracy, according to Babasaheb, did not mean political rights alone but something more than that. The fundamental elements in democracy, according to Babasaheb, consist of liberty, equality, human experience, prevalence of the rule of law, respect for natural rights and an emphasis on the individual in social relationships. In his perception of democracy, we find a judicious blending of the principles of liberal democracy and democratic socialism.

The Constituent Assembly of India gave him an opportunity to give shape to his social philosophy and ideals of democracy. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Dr. Ambedkar anticipated every conceivable requirement of the new polity. Drawing from the experiences of other nations and keeping in view the peculiar needs of our society, he raised the magnificent edifice of the Constitution of India. The speech delivered by him on 25 November 1949 in the Constituent Assembly is as relevant today as it was earlier because of its thrust on the attainment of socio-economic equality and not just political equality.

The role Babasaheb played in the making of our Constitution had been praised unequivocally by one and all. Eulogizing the tremendous task performed by Babasaheb in formulating and piloting the Draft Constitution, Shri Pattabhi Sitaramayya said: "...What a steam-roller intellect he brought to bear upon this magnificent and tremendous task; irresistible, indomitable, unconquerable, levelling down tall palms and short puppies..., whatever he felt to be right he stood by, regardless of consequences."

Friends, by offering floral tributes to this colossus on this day every year, we are only expressing our gratitude to him for what he did for the nation. For us, it is also an occasion to rededicate ourselves towards the realisation of the lofty ideals and goals of Bharat Ratna B.R. Ambedkar.

With these words, I once again thank the Resident Commissioner for having invited me to this function and offer my tribute to this illustrious son of Mother India.

Thank you.

KAMARAJ — A GREAT SON OF INDIA*

It gives me immense pleasure to have the statue of Thiru Kumarasami Kamaraj installed in the precincts of Parliament House and I am indeed very happy to extend a warm welcome to you all on this occasion.

We are extremely grateful to the Honourable Vice-President for having graced this occasion, in spite of his hectic parliamentary schedule.

We are beholden to the Honourable Prime Minister for unveiling the statue of Shri Kamaraj in the Parliament House.

We are grateful to Thiru K. Ramamurthy, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas for having donated this life size statue of a great son of our nation. I congratulate Dr. Mani Nagappa for having made a piece that looks so real.

Shri Kamaraj was a unique personality in ways more than one. The saga of Kamaraj's life symbolises a spirit of sacrifice, courage of conviction, capacity to resist temptation, ability to withstand trials with dignity and above all the nobility to exercise power with humility.

Shri Kamaraj did not have Western education, nor a great legacy to fall back on. Kamaraj had only elementary education and could not go beyond. Having lost his father at the tender age of six, it soon fell to his lot to support his family by taking up odd trades. But his heart was elsewhere. Young Kamaraj was drawn to political work and soon he jumped into our historic non-violent struggle for freedom under the banner of the Indian National Congress. He was imprisoned for two years during the Salt *Satyagraha*. He suffered imprisonment again in 1941, 1942 and 1945.

*At the unveiling of the statue of Shri K. Kamaraj in Parliament House Complex, New Delhi (15 July 1998).

Starting as a grass-root worker, Kamaraj had an eventful political career, culminating in his becoming the President of the Congress. The journey had many ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies and other vagaries of politics. However, the man always came out of all these varied experiences with the same humility, with the same conviction and with the same courage.

Kamaraj was a man of the masses who drew comfort from his closeness to the people—the ordinary workers and voters. He was gifted with plenty of native intelligence. His approach was down to earth, his perception pragmatic and his method simple. He was remarkably free from any kind of complex or prejudice, ever receptive to new ideas and made himself available to people at any time of the day.

When he became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, he laid a firm foundation for modern Tamil Nadu and introduced many novel schemes and innovations in administration. The introduction of free primary education goes to his credit as the Chief Minister of Madras. When the Party fared badly at the elections, he had the courage to quit office and take up party work full-time, thus paving the way for what is called the Kamaraj Plan. This ability to relinquish office came to him easily because he never sought after power in the first place.

Kamaraj firmly believed in the Gandhian principle that to serve the people, it is not necessary to hold an office. Yet, he never shirked from responsibility when it was entrusted to him.

When Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri passed away rather too untimely and too suddenly, Kamaraj played historic role in steering the nation through those critical times with his quiet efficiency and immense wisdom. He built a great respect for the country as Congress President by his handling of many a crisis at the Centre and in the States.

His efforts to build a consensus approach over the question of succession to the top job are important lessons in political management. When it did not work in 1966, he followed the democratic path of holding an election for the post of Prime Minister. That was the first time in the history of our parliamentary democracy when a Prime Minister was elected through a ballot and the credit goes to Kamaraj.

As we see his statue everyday, his sterling qualities of head and heart, his unassuming personality, keen political insight, high integrity of character, fairness of conduct, openness to suggestion, closeness to people and his humility in disposition should guide us as political workers, public servants and parliamentarians.

By unveiling the statue of Shri Kamaraj, we have attempted to express our humble tribute to one of the greatest sons of our country. May the statue and the towering personality of Shri Kamaraj keep inspiring us for ever.

Thank you.

N.G. RANGA — AN OUTSTANDING PARLIAMENTARIAN*

It is a matter of great pleasure to associate myself with the unveiling of the statue of Prof. N.G. Ranga in the Parliament House. I am indeed very happy to extend a warm welcome to you all on this occasion. Statues of several eminent Indian leaders have been unveiled in the Parliament House and these have been donated by the State Governments, Public Sector Undertakings and various Trusts. This is one statue of a great son of our country in this series. We are going to have the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel—another towering leader—very soon.

We would like to express our gratefulness to the Honourable Vice-President, Shri Krishan Kantji for unveiling the statue of Prof. Ranga and for agreeing to address this distinguished gathering.

We are also thankful to the Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji for taking time off his busy schedule and gracing this function.

We also express our deep gratitude to the Andhra Pradesh Government and Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu Garu for donating this statue of Prof. Rangaji to the Parliament.

We also thank Shri D. Shankar and Brothers who made this excellent statue of Prof. Rangaji.

Prof. N.G. Ranga was one of the longest serving parliamentarians in our parliamentary history. A follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Rangaji was attracted by the National Movement at an early age and suffered imprisonment several times for his active participation in the freedom struggle.

Rangaji had an excellent academic career. After completing his initial education at his home town Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, he went to Oxford for appearing in the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.). He gave up his plans for I.C.S.

*At the unveiling of the statue of Prof. N.G. Ranga in Parliament House Complex, New Delhi (27 July 1998).

and obtained a D. Litt. degree for his thesis on 'The Economics of Handloom'. It was during his stay in Oxford that he was greatly attracted by the ideologies of socialist thinkers. A very good and balanced mix of the influence of social reformers like Bipin Chandra Pal and other Indian revolutionaries during his early days in his home town and the socialist ideas received from the West, guided all his future actions.

Prof. Ranga took a special interest in the welfare of the peasants, weavers, labourers and the downtrodden of the country. Throughout his public life, he acted as the spokesman and stood in the forefront for farmers' welfare. His vast experience in peasant movements came handy when he became the President of the All India Kisan Conference for five times between 1936 and 1952. Later, he became the President of the National Union of Agriculturists in 1977.

Rangaji had great faith in Indian democracy. He believed that people should have the freedom of expression. He was very outspoken and forthright in airing his views in Parliament. During his long parliamentary life, he was mainly associated with the Congress Party. On a call by Rajaji, he joined the Swatantra Party for a short period. However, he returned to the Congress Party later.

Rangaji's sharp mind, humour, parliamentary discipline and skills were at their best during his days in the Opposition benches. He was one of those who had differences of opinion with his colleagues on the role of the public sector. He did not hesitate to cross swords with even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the House. Yet, what is important is that in spite of differences, Nehruji held Rangaji in high esteem and always called him 'Acharya Ranga' in all cordiality.

He was a man of simple living and high thinking. The role played by him in the affairs of this country, and particularly in the State of Andhra Pradesh, is unique and unparalleled.

He was awarded the *Padma Vibhushan* in 1991. He was also honoured by the parliamentarians on his completion of 50 years in parliamentary service. I am confident that his statue in the Parliament House would always be a source of inspiration for all of us. His Gandhian approach and commitment to the national cause would ever remain a shining example for us and the whole nation.

Thank you.

BIRSA MUNDA — A CHAMPION OF THE TRIBALS' RIGHTS*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Birsa Munda, a great patriot and a renowned tribal leader.

May I take this opportunity to thank heartily the Respected Rashtrapatiji for having graced this occasion and unveiled the statue of Birsa Munda.

I would also like to express our thanks to Respected Up-Rashtrapatiji, Pradhan Mantriji and other distinguished guests for being with us today.

Shri B.C. Mohanty who has sculpted this marvellous piece of art and the Steel Authority of India which has donated the statue of Birsa Munda also deserve our thanks.

It may not perhaps be out of place to mention here that a portrait of Birsa Munda was unveiled in the Central Hall in October 1989. The portrait now adorns the Parliamentary Museum and Archives.

Birsa Munda occupies an important position as a champion of the long-suffering tribals and a martyr in the long succession of heroes of Chhotanagpur. His heroism, sacrifice and sensitivity form the theme of many inspiring folk lores. His short but eventful life of 25 years is an example of a valiant struggle of his people against socio-economic injustice and political conquering.

During the course of this gallant struggle against the British rule, Birsa Munda suffered rigorous imprisonment which led to his untimely death in the prison itself. The movement he launched was aimed at reviving the existing society and reconstructing it on the high principles that were destroyed by

*At the unveiling of the statue of Birsa Munda in Parliament House Complex, New Delhi (28 August 1998).

the alien rule. The underlying object of the Birsa movement was internal purification. Along with it was associated the desire to remove the colonial Government and put an end to an oppressive agrarian system and other feudal practices.

The anti-British credo of Munda's movement led to the mobilisation of both tribals and non-tribals which can be linked to our freedom struggle and the national awakening. As in other socio-religious movements of the 19th century, Birsa Munda laid emphasis on religious reforms, social uplift and cultural regeneration. As a matter of fact, several subsequent socio-religious movements in the region bore a close resemblance to his movements.

Birsa Munda played a notable role in joining the Munda people for their political emancipation and infused in them the spirit of nationalism. He gave them a leadership and code of life. He organized volunteers to fight the British Government to end the Kingdom of the Queen. During the revolt of 1899-1900 against the British Raj, Birsa emerged as the supreme leader of the Mundas and the tribal movement in the region.

Birsa and his followers, with a high mission of service to the suffering humanity, rejuvenated the dying Members of people's enthusiasm. When Chhotanagpur was hit by an epidemic, it was Birsa, the saviour of his people, who served the deprived and the distressed with tireless zeal. *Dharti Abba* (Father of the Earth), as he was called affectionately, was so committed to the welfare of his people that the distressed believed in his healing touch for relief.

Today, as we remember Birsa Munda, we have to think of the problems facing the tribals. It is a reality that the tribals form some of the most disadvantaged sections of the Indian society. We cannot build a progressive and just society unless we succeed in our endeavours to improve the quality of their life and give them a better tomorrow.

It is befitting that the statue of a great revolutionary and a vocal champion of tribals' rights should be installed in Parliament House. By installing the statue of Birsa Munda, we are honouring the memory of a great social reformer, a constructive genius and above all, an enthusiastic nationalist.

This is also a tribute to all great tribal leaders belonging to different States in our country. In this context, the name of a great tribal leader from Andhra Pradesh, Shri Alluri Sitarama Raju, comes to my mind. It was for the freedom of our country and the elimination of exploitation of our tribals that

this great son of India lived and laid down his life. Apart from the Congress stream of freedom movement in different parts of India, there were a few other streams of freedom movement. Alluri's was one such stream with its emphasis on armed struggle for freedom.

I am confident that the statue of Birsa Munda in the Parliament House Complex will be a source of inspiration and encouragement to all of us. A strong, united, progressive and compassionate India is the most enduring memorial for Birsa Munda. Let us rededicate ourselves to the noble ideals cherished and brought up by Birsa Munda.

Thank you.

SIR ARTHUR COTTON — A VISIONARY ENGINEER*

We have gathered here today on the solemn occasion of the Death Centenary Programme of General Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton, an eminent engineer, who devoted his entire life for improving the lot of the people of South India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular. It is in recognition of his invaluable services that he has been described as the 'Father of Irrigation' in Southern India. The people of Andhra Pradesh, owe a great debt of gratitude to Sir Arthur Cotton for the remarkable role that he played in carrying out various irrigation projects in the State and making available the bounties of nature to the people.

Sir Arthur Cotton worked on the construction of the Cauvery delta canal system in 1834; the first permanent diversion work on the Godavari and its canals in 1846; and on the upper anicut across the Krishna in 1854. He also directed the construction of the Upper Ganga Canal, the largest irrigation canal in the world of those days. He provided an excellent drainage system for the Krishna and Godavari deltas and conceived India's first comprehensive navigation plan. Needless to say, these remarkable achievements of Sir Arthur Cotton serve as an example to the young engineers and others who cannot but marvel at his brilliance and dedication. A man of courage and conviction, he left a rich legacy for the coming generations. Sir Arthur and his comrades were true pioneers in the trade, learning as they did by trial and error. Those were the days when the stage was set for the large scale irrigation we see in Andhra Pradesh today, the State which ranks third in the country in terms of gross irrigated area. Those were also the days when a start was made to turn the country's areas, most ravaged by frequent famines and natural calamities like cyclones and resultant floods, into the granaries and blooming orchards.

Friends, there is no disputing the fact that agricultural growth is a prerequisite for the economic and social development of our country. Agriculture

*At the Death Centenary Programme of General Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton, Visvesvaraya Bhavan, Khairatabad, Hyderabad (24 July 1999).

contributes to 28 per cent of our Gross National Product (GNP) and about 60 per cent of employment. It is also the primary source of livelihood in the rural areas which account for 75 per cent of India's population and 80 per cent of its poor. Irrigated agriculture contributes nearly 56 per cent of agricultural output. Apart from increasing production, irrigation projects enhance productivity, improve income in agriculture sector and reduce uncertainties on account of unpredictable fluctuation in rainfall which is often witnessed in rainfed farming. Irrigation also provides supplementary water in times of low rainfall.

As we remember Sir Arthur Cotton on the occasion of his Death Centenary, we should keep in the mind that proper water management is a critical component of sustainable development. Indeed, water is an essential factor in a large number of productive activities, of which one of the most important is the production of food by irrigation. It is only by imbibing the qualities of social sensitivity, dedication, devotion and rare courage which Sir Arthur Cotton symbolised and working for the welfare of the teeming millions that we can repay the immeasurable debt that we owe to him.

I am happy to learn that the Andhra Pradesh State Centre of the Institution of Engineers is bringing out a Souvenir on this occasion as a tribute to this visionary who left an indelible impress of his personality in Southern India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular. I am sure that this Souvenir will not only provide us an insight into this multi-faceted personality but also the various challenging tasks undertaken by him.

Before I conclude, let me take this opportunity to thank the Andhra Pradesh State Centre of the Institution of Engineers for having associated me with the Death Centenary Programme of Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton. I also pay my homage to the memory of Sir Arthur.

Thank you.

POTTI SRIRAMULU — A HISTORIC PERSONALITY*

I am, indeed, very happy to be here amidst you. And I deem it my proud privilege to unveil the statue of *Amarajeevi* Potti Sriramulu in Kakinada.

Potti Sriramulu is one name which never fails to raise the hair of Telugus in awe and wonder. Whenever we think of Potti Sriramulu and Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu, we are choked with emotion. Such was the courage of conviction they had shown for the causes dearer to them that today we scarcely think it is possible! Who could have bared his chest to the bullets of the British guns but Tanguturi? Who could have sat on a fast unto death for fifty-eight days but Potti Sriramulu?

The drive for a separate State of Andhra had its origins in the birth of Andhra Mahasabha in 1907. In 1911, a map was prepared showing the Telugu speaking areas for the first time. In 1914, the Andhra Mahasabha at its second meeting at Vijayawada had resolved to strive for a separate State for the Telugu speaking people as the right solution for the all round advancement of the Andhra region. The movement was first carried out culturally by bringing about a refinement in the language to make it easy for the common man to comprehend readily. In this, people like Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu, Gidugu Rammurthy, Gurajada Appa Rao, Unnava Laxminarayana and others played an active role by creating socially relevant literature in simple language. This had heightened the consciousness of Telugus as a linguistic group, having a distinct cultural identity and they started taking pride in that identity. This did not come in the way of their participating whole-heartedly in the national freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. It was in this struggle that Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu bared his chest to the British bullets while protesting against the Simon Commission, thus earning the sobriquet "*Andhra Kesari*"

*At the function to unveil a statue of Potti Sriramulu, Kakinada (1 February 1999).

However, in the euphoria of Independence, formation of the Republic and the excitement of General Elections, the aspirations of the Andhra people were not taken a serious note of by the powers that be. The demand for a separate State though pending for long, did not attract the attention of the nation until Potti Sriramulu sat on a historic fast unto death at the residence of Bulusu Sambamurthy at Mylapore in Madras on 10 October 1952. This saga of a silent struggle in truly Gandhian style went on for full fifty-eight days but could not move the Government. Meanwhile, the health of Sriramulu deteriorated and he eventually passed away. His martyrdom ignited the minds of Andhra people into a revolutionary frenzy which led to a widespread agitation all over the Andhra region and many people lost their lives in police firing. It eventually led to the formation of a separate Andhra State for the Telugu speaking people of Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions on 1 October 1953 with Kurnool as the Capital, Shri C.M. Chaturvedi as Governor, Prakasam Pantulu as the Chief Minister and Guntur as the seat of the High Court. This was what later on evolved as Andhra Pradesh on 1 November 1956.

Today, we are able to claim with pride our identity as Andhras due to the supreme sacrifice of this great son of the soil whom we gratefully refer as '*Amarajeevi*'. Potti Sriramulu may have passed away physically in 1952 but he is immortal in our hearts and heads. The spirit of his historic sacrifice continues to evoke emotions in us, the Telugus. We are grateful to him for getting us a separate State. As a mark of respect for him, statues of Sriramulu have come up in every nook and corner of the State and we pay our tributes by garlanding his statues on 1 November, the formation day of modern Andhra Pradesh.

Friends, paying respects to our leaders is a healthy tradition. But we must not confine our tributes to mere symbolic gestures. Everyone of us must deem it our sacred duty to make true the dream of Sriramulu for which he died. The dream is to build a strong and prosperous State for the people of Andhra Pradesh to remain a proud and prominent part of the Indian Republic. We have struggled for a separate State with a view to achieving all round development of our people. Earlier, our grievances were not adequately redressed nor our demands sufficiently addressed. We wanted to change that. Andhra Pradesh stands first in the alphabetical list of our States. But our position at the top must not be just alphabetical. We must make it the number one State in all-round development as well.

It is in this context that we must see the concept of *Swarnandhra Pradesh* and dedicate ourselves to make it a reality. That is what can make the Souls of *Amarajeevi Potti Sriramulu, Andhra Kesari Prakasam Pantulu, Kandukuri, Gurajada, Gidugu, Unnava* and others feel proud of the cause for which they lived and laid down their lives.

Therefore, on this occasion, let us take a pledge to rededicate ourselves to the *Sundara Swapnam* of these heroes and make it come true.

Thank you.

ALLURI SITARAMA RAJU — VIPLAVA JYOTI*

I am happy to release this publication on *Viplava Jyoti* Alluri Sitarama Raju. It is indeed a pleasurable coincidence that this is being done on the Independence Day. It was for the Independence of Mother India from the clutches of colonial rule that Sitarama Raju lived and laid down his life. Therefore, this book comes as a befitting tribute to the memory of this great but unsung hero of our freedom movement from Andhra Pradesh.

Alluri Sitarama Raju is a name that raises the hair of every Andhrite and is synonymous with revolutionary zeal. This great hero was appalled by the nakedness of tribal exploitation in what is called the agency area of Godavari Districts in Andhra Pradesh. This is a forest area inhabited by tribals who eke out a living in the forests and live a life of innocence and simplicity. For that very reason, they were subjected to a great deal of harassment and cruelty by the exploitative nature of the colonial rule. The placidity of their lives was perturbed by many insensitive rules and regulations which led to their exploitation and impoverishment. They were in a pitiable condition desperately looking for a ray of hope.

Then came Alluri on the scene who was moved by the plight of the tribals in the agency area. As a student in Kakinada, he was witness to many an appalling incident of brutality and cruelty of the Raj. His young blood boiled, his tender heart burnt and his brain boggled by these incidents. And looking at the miserable existence of the people around him, Rama Raju was convinced that mass revolt and armed rebellion were necessary to drive the British out.

Our national freedom struggle, spearheaded mainly by the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, was committed to the principles of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. But there were other streams of the freedom movement in different parts of India which were no less significant. Alluri's was one such stream. He decided to wage a war against the rulers by adopting guerilla

*At the function to release a book on Alluri Sitarama Raju, New Delhi (15 August 1998).

tactics, and the forest terrain of the agency was ideally suited for this method. He convinced the tribals of the necessity of an armed struggle for freedom. He started recruiting youths to his army. His weapons were the primitive bow and arrow but his spirit was indomitable.

The British police having suffered heavily in this fight, made an all out effort to crush this armed rebellion. Given their might, it was not a difficult task at all even though Rama Raju inflicted heavy casualties on the British forces. Rama Raju was eventually caught and shot at point blank range without a trial. Thus, he attained martyrdom and a permanent place in our hearts and history. It was very clear that Rama Raju would lose the war even if he won the battle, given the primitiveness of his method *vis a vis* the might of his opponent.

But the moral of Alluri Sitarama Raju's story is his revolutionary zeal and patriotic passion. There were other heroes who took this path like Ras Behari Bose, Bhagat Singh, Birsa Munda and of course Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. They have inspired the people with their acts of heroism and valour. They were the people who were fired by a zeal and moved by a self-motivated passion—that was to see Mother India unshackled from the chains of colonialism. Freedom was what they breathed and freedom was what they dreamed.

Today, fifty years after we got freedom, there is a general feeling that we still have a long way to go in realizing the goals we had set for ourselves. Why is it that our all-round progress is much less than what we could have achieved as a free nation? Is it because we lack intelligence? Is it because we lack resources? Or is it because we lack the will to succeed? How to drive away this apathy, this indifference and this resignation? This is the moot question.

Today, we need the revolutionary zeal and patriotic spirit of the likes of Sitarama Raju. We need to be imbued with a new spirit to build a brave new nation. That is why we must read the story of this great hero. I am glad that this book is written in English for a wider reach of the name, fame and the spirit of this brave soldier. I congratulate the author Shri P.S. Sarma for his good work.

Thank you.

TYAGARAJA — FATHER OF CARNATIC MUSIC*

It gives me great pleasure to be here amidst you at the Tyagaraja Aradhana Saptaham. I would like to assure you all at the very outset that I am going to give a brief speech. I am aware that you are here to hear Ravi Kiran and not Balayogi. You can heave a sigh of relief. For those engaged in the rough and tumble of political life, to attend a music concert is indeed a soothing experience. The serenity that music can bring to the mind is such that it can put to rest even the most troubled souls. "Sisurvetti Pasurvetti Vetti gaana rasambu, phanihi."

The melody of music is so soothing that it can mesmerise children, animals and even snakes. There is another interpretation to this *sloka* according to which Sisur that is Kumaraswamy, Pasur that is Nandiswara and Phani that is Audishesu could all understand and enjoy the essence of music. To my mind, both the interpretations appear the same as in the temporal world Kumaraswamy stand for the child, Nandiswar for the animal and Audishesu for the snake. They all enjoy music alike. Music makes no distinction. Such is the power of music that it is universal in its appeal.

In India we have one music but two traditions. This side of the Vindhya, we cannot think of music without Tyagaraja. The *Bhakti* movement in music which originated in the *sankeertanas* of Annamaiah, carried forward by Purandaradasa, had attained its pinnacle at the hands of Sadguru Shri Tyagaraja Swamy through his countless *kritis*, most of which were composed in Telugu language. There is something lyrical about Telugu which makes it eminently suitable to music compositions. That is why, Subrahmanya Bharati described it as "Sundara Telugu." The songs of the Saint reflected various moods of a devout soul who was under the sway of an intense *bhaktibhava* and had an austere life style shunning away material comforts in search of a path to become one with Almighty.

*At the Tyagaraja Aradhana Saptaham, Hyderabad (10 February 1999).

Tyagaraja is long dead but lives amidst us through his compositions. Musicians from John Higgins to Jesudas render his songs with devotion and sweetness. And music lovers never get tired of his songs which have been sung countless times at every music concert. Such was the depth of Tyagaraja's compositions that laymen as well as learned men would draw solace from the intense pathos and immediate pleasure, empathy and endurance, *vedana* and *nivedana* as reflected in his *kirtanas* of various kinds like the *Ghanaraga Pancharatna Kirtanas*, *Tatwabodha Kirtanas*, *Utsava Sampradaya Kirtanas*, etc. Songs like *Endaro mahanubhavulu*, *Nagumomu*, *Samajavaragamana*, *Manasa etulortune*, *Manasu swadhinamaina*, *Mokshamugalada*, *Marugelara*, *Etavunara*, *Nidhi chala sukhama*, *Prakkala nilabadi*, *Chakkanirajamargamu*, *Nee dayarada*, *Rara maa intidaka*, etc. are indeed immortal in the minds of music lovers which never fail to enthral the *rasikas* attending the *Ganasabhas*. Legend has it that Tyagaraja composed 24000 songs equal to the number of *slokas* written by Valmiki in the Ramayan. But today, we have only a few hundred of them in circulation which are propagated through concerts and *aradhana* festivals.

Sangeeta Sabhas all over the country are doing a yeoman's service to the cause of music by organising Tyagaraja Aradhana Festivals to commemorate the demise of this Saint composer who shall remain immortal as long as Carnatic music has an audience. Today his compositions along with Dixitar's and Syama Shastry's constitute the fountain of Carnatic music. But, *Sangeeta Sabhas* are confined to cities and have an air of exclusiveness about them. The need of the hour is to promote classical music in small towns and villages. I hope the *Sabhas* will organise concerts outside the cities and bring music nearer to the people in the countryside who are swayed by film music all the while.

I congratulate the organisers for arranging this musical feast by featuring some of the best artistes in the week-long festival. I wish them the very best in their future endeavours to promote the cause of music. And I wish you all a happy listening.

Thank you.

VIII
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COMMONWEALTH AND GLOBALIZATION*

The emergence of independent Nation States has been one of the most significant developments of the twentieth century. As we enter the twenty-first century, these Nation States are globalizing. This has implications for politics and economy. In the process of globalization politics gets more driven by economics than the other way about. State controls yield place to market forces, in different degrees. Countries are said to be in "transition". Economic reforms are considered as a means for this transition.

Reforms are painful. The longer the past period of controls, the more painful are the reforms. A sudden break with the past brought about in some countries has been devastating for them. Slow transition in some others has subjected them to prolonged pain.

How is this devastation or pain caused? It is caused by the new style of management of national economies. States accustomed to controlled economies have to decontrol and deregulate. In State controlled economies, there is control or regulation of production, trade, services, currency and labour. When the market takes over, there is decontrol and deregulation in all these spheres. In other words, countries reforming their economies have to throw open their production, trade, services, currency, etc. That is, anyone, including those from abroad, can enter these areas of the economy. This scenario, by itself, implies an onslaught on newly industrialised and developing countries by the industrialised and developed countries which are economically superior. In essence, it becomes a competition between strong and weak countries. In the weak countries, domestic industries could fold up. Imports could be swamped by the products and services of the developed world. Currencies could get devalued. Foreign capital could take flight after making its kill. And, domestic labour could face unemployment.

*On 'Globalization—Its impact on Commonwealth Governments and Parliaments' at the 44th CPA Conference, Wellington, New Zealand (19 October 1998).

This is not to say that globalization is bad by itself. In fact, it has its merits. It is good and inevitable. The basic merit of globalization is that it is a challenge and an opportunity for comparatively weaker countries to become strong. How does a weak country become strong? It is by efficient deployment of resources. Many developing countries are rich in resources. But their people are poor. This is because of poor economic management which, in turn, is caused by poor political management. The political economy has to be sound. What does this mean? It means a whole new approach to the management of all facets of the national economy.

Where the public sector is not earning revenues even to sustain itself, it has to be reformed. There are countries where the cumulative public sector losses wipe out a whole year's GDP. The public sector should be made profitable. Where a public sector corporation cannot be made profitable, it should be privatised, if feasible, or closed down depending upon the circumstances.

Not all government subsidies are essential. Subsidies do not always reach the targeted groups. Non-essential subsidies should be identified and discontinued at least in a phased manner.

To survive in global competition, weaker countries should establish policies for export-led growth as well. Production should be reoriented significantly to manufacture traded goods. Economies of scale and technology upgradation should be consciously opted for. Many developing countries continue to remain traders in primary goods. They should go in for value-added manufacture which would be employment-creating.

To reorient production, trade and technology, capital is required. To minimise dependence on foreign capital, the domestic tax base has to be widened to the extent feasible. This can be done by bringing those with a capacity to pay under tax incidence. Often, not all those who have the capacity to pay are actually taxed. Besides, foreign capital would need to be directed for investment in the infrastructural sector. This would help in the expansion of sustainable production and trade. Capital, whether domestic or foreign, has to be serviced; it has to be repaid. So, capital investments have to be prudent; they have to yield returns for meeting pay back commitments. Foreign capital, in particular, would be as volatile as prudence in investments warrants. No doubt, appropriate national and international monitoring, if not regulatory, mechanisms would need to be established for preventing the undesirable activities of fly-by-night capital market operators. Labour should be productive, even as there should be no exploitation. This would need to be the guiding principle for labour-market regulation.

For bringing about all this sea-change, a necessary requirement is human development. For the purpose, investments are needed on priority basis in education and impartation of employable skills.

Economic reforms have necessarily to take into account the human dimensions. Reform without human face is bound to backlash politically and economically. The industrialised and developed countries as well as multilateral agencies which often like to force the pace of economic reforms should be alive to these concerns of countries undergoing the reform process.

I would feel that if the Governments and parliamentarians of Commonwealth countries, many of them being developing countries, are well informed of these approaches in their strategies, actions and interactions, they would have nothing to be worried about facing globalization.

I thank you all.

Let me first compliment Your Excellency Gennady Seleznev, Honourable Chairman of the State Duma on your election as the President of this 100th Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference.

Peace and security at the national and international levels are primary requirements of human life. It is obvious that human survival precedes its development. If we step back in time and look at our experience during the current century, what we recall is serious and frequent disruption of peace. Two World Wars were fought. Several civil wars were waged. Insurgencies and ethnic conflicts were rampant. Indeed, human kind has inflicted on itself incredible violence and bloodshed.

After the U.N. Charter was drawn up at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, President Truman declared: "We did much more than draft an international agreement among 50 nations. We set down on paper the only principles that will enable civilized human life to continue to survive on this globe". What followed, however, was prolonged Cold War which was marked by arms race—particularly, competitive stockpiling of nuclear arms.

India remains committed to global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. In this context, we should bear in mind the highest priority accorded to nuclear disarmament in the final document of the 10th Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice about the obligations of the States to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. A Nuclear Weapons Convention on the model of the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention needs to be established within a time-bound framework.

*At the "General Debate on the Political, Economic and Social Situation in the World", at the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Moscow (8 September 1998).

This is the 50th year of adoption of the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights. The National Parliaments may adopt resolutions re-affirming their commitment to protection of human rights, especially those of women and children, in all their dimensions through law and in practice. The economic content of human rights deserves to be given a higher profile.

The consequences of economic sanctions and the manner of their implementation, however, legally and technically justifiable, do have an adverse impact on the protection of human rights. The use of sanctions as an instrument of disciplining countries needs to be reviewed by the world community in this Golden Jubilee year of Human Rights Declaration.

The world is faced with a deep economic crises today. The financial crash of East and South-East Asian economies has taken its political toll. It has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. It would also seem to have become endemic. Economies, which account for 40 per cent of world output, are already in steep recession. The short term prospect in these economies is one of decline in growth rates. These trends are having a spread effect as countries of other regions are also getting affected. The lesson to be learnt is simple. Globalization and liberalization, no doubt, open up national economies to capital flows and investments; but this also exposes countries from where capital and investments flow to risks inherent in transnational enterprises. How do these risks arise? By the imprudence of not merely the users of capital but that of its providers.

What is the solution? Is it reversal of globalization and liberalization? Obviously this cannot be. The economic problems of the world today do not detract from expansion of international business, trade and services which is the essence of globalization and liberalization. What is needed is that this expansion should be orderly. How is this ensured? Management of national economies should be sound; domestic financial institutions should be vigilant; investments should be capable of yielding the scheduled pay-backs; lines between business and mere speculation should be drawn; an international financial regulation system needs to be created for establishment of norms and standards of financial business and for their enforcement.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) which was created to promote global economic cooperation and prevent global economic crises should be strengthened, the institution itself being provided with adequate resources. On its part, the IMF would need to desist from applying universal prescriptions to all countries faced with even similar economic problems. Different country situations would warrant different solutions.

The World Trade Organization has come into being with mandate for facilitating the removal of restrictive trade practices and expansion of trade. The developing countries do have an apprehension that new forms of protectionism might emerge because of social concerns, such as labour standards and environment issues, being linked to trade. These concerns should not be permitted any leverage in international trade.

That the State does have a crucial role to play concurrently with the processes of globalization and liberalization has to be clearly recognized. The market cannot be left to the exclusive or even predominant arbiter in the management of national economies. Economic crises, whether they are due to inefficient State apparatus or the market, are equally undesirable. Development cooperation in terms of financial aid and resources and technology transfers, with differential treatment for developing countries, are relevant side by side with enhancement of the role of the market.

Before I conclude, I may invite attention to the latest report of the United Nations Family Planning Agency about the world population reaching the level of 6 billion! A lot of work has been done at the international and national levels to deliberate on the problems of population explosion. Several population control measures have also been brought under implementation in terms of national action. The developing countries have a special role in containing population within their carrying capacity.

The youth, whether they be of the developed or the developing part of the world, are increasingly becoming victims of drug addiction. Drug and narcotic trade has come to thrive on this phenomenon. The underlying cause for this situation is the apprehension of the youth about the uncertainty of their future. Hope about the future should be held out to the youth; they should be given the security of their family; involved in constructive activities; and be retrieved from their feelings of social and economic exclusion.

I wish the Conference all success, Mr. President. I thank all the delegates for their kind attention and the authorities of the Russian Federation for their hospitality.

CONTEMPORARY REALITIES OF THE WORLD*

The primary task of the world community still continues to be that of ushering in a just, equitable and progressive world order through socio-economic development, universal, non-discriminatory and total disarmament and preservation of the global environment.

In the past five decades of India's Independence, it has been her consistent endeavour to help bring about such a world order based on respect for, and protection of, human rights and equality of human beings, guided by the principles of peaceful co-existence and prosperity for all.

Revolutionary advances in science and technology have opened the door for a profound transformation in the material world, pointing to the high quality of life that people could enjoy all over the world. But, it is a stark reality that despite these advances, many people across the world have remained unaffected by them. Still, people in different regions experience conditions of life at subsistence levels—famine, grinding poverty, human degradation and exploitation. These conditions have also remained unchanged for hundreds of years. Side by side with this scenario of incredible adversity for vast masses in the world, there are also regions of phenomenal affluence. This imbalance and iniquitous distribution of wealth portend destabilising impact on the world political order. Indeed, poverty and iniquities constitute as potent a threat as arms proliferation, if not more, to internal security within nations and international security.

In this backdrop, the prime focus of the United Nations should continue to be development. Countries big and small, strong and weak, the developed and the developing, should constructively participate in global affairs as equal partners in progress under the United Nations and its specialised agencies. And, for the purpose structures, including those of the United Nations which govern international cooperation should be revitalised and

*At the "General Debate on the Political, Economic and Social Situation in the World" at the 101st Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Brussels (12 April 1999).

reformed wherever necessary reflecting the aspirations of the developing countries which represent two-thirds of the membership of the United Nations.

The United Nations should come to have an over-riding role in international peace-keeping in the present context of the forces of unipolarism increasingly gaining ground. And, the forces of non-alignment should be strengthened to neutralise the unilateral activism of military blocs. Economic sanctions as an instrument of international conflict resolution should be the last resort, considering the human distress it can cause and, if at all resorted to, should be implemented with a human face.

The global economic agenda of prosperity through competition should incorporate the developmental needs of poorer countries. And, the benefits of the processes of globalisation and liberalisation should be available to all.

In-country and international economic migration has assumed huge proportions over the years. Within nations, this phenomenon has strained urban infrastructure for provision even of basic minimum needs like food, water, public health and sanitation. It has also caused violence to environment. Internationally, economic migration creates tensions between the migrants and the people of the host countries. The real solution to the problem is in improving the quality of life of people in their own original habitations so that people do not have to migrate.

As we approach the next millennium, it is for us parliamentarians to give serious consideration to these issues, shape national policies and international thinking so that the world is made a better place to live for us, as well as for future generations.

Thank you.

TASKS BEFORE THE SAARC PARLIAMENTARIANS*

I feel honoured to be present with all of you today in this beautiful and historic city of Dhaka. I am pleased to participate in this Third Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians. I have the honour to extend the warm and fraternal greetings of the people and Parliament of India to Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, Hon'ble Speaker and members of the Bangladesh Parliament as also to the Distinguished Speakers and members of other SAARC Parliaments.

Starting from New Delhi in 1995, through Islamabad to Dhaka, the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians has embarked upon a journey with a mission of friendship and cooperation amongst the Parliaments and the peoples of this region. I am confident that we shall be able to continue this journey with greater vigour in the future too.

The idea of regional cooperation had a somewhat late start in South Asia. With the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in 1985 a new vista was opened up for collective action, wherever possible, to accelerate social and economic development in the region. It was the vision of our political leaderships that has rendered this forum feasible. Over nearly a decade and a half of its existence, the SAARC has facilitated orderly and meaningful interaction amongst the peoples of our region.

The framework for cooperation in the SAARC includes a host of areas such as education, poverty eradication, agriculture, environment, science and technology, communications and trade. With the progress we have been able to achieve in these fields, the scope of activities under the SAARC has further expanded.

*At the inaugural function of the Third Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, Dhaka (19 March 1999).

It is a duty we owe to our peoples, severally as sovereign independent nations and jointly as the most populous regional group in the world, to consolidate the fruits of cooperation we have already achieved and channelise our expanded cooperation for achieving the socio-economic empowerment of our region. We need to create a South Asian consciousness, an awareness of what we stand for as a region, of what we strive towards as a region, and of what we mean to the world as a region. Together, we can meet the challenges of the present-day world, together we can multiply our resources, our potential and energies to shed the stamp of developing countries and come to be recognised as nations to be counted and a region to be respected.

The economic horizon of the world is marked by ceaseless efforts at regional integration, one of the latest and significant developments being eleven countries of Europe launching a common currency, the Euro, starting 1st January 1999. We also can and have to, take planned steps at ever increasing integration so as to achieve economic cohesiveness. We have already achieved the institutional framework for SAPTA and we now should move further to make SAFTA a reality by the year 2001. We need to further develop linkages between ourselves to give us strength individually and as a region. This calls for increased economic cooperation within the region covering the entire gamut of economic activities ranging from agriculture to industry and from information technology to human resource development.

We, the parliamentarians, who have been entrusted by the people with the task of promoting their welfare, have a special responsibility in ensuring the success of SAARC, its objectives, politics and programmes of action. We as popular representatives, have the special advantage of carrying peoples' concerns into SAARC activities and reinforce them with ultimate popular approval.

We have two very interesting topical and regionally relevant subjects for discussion at this Conference: one relating to communication and exchange of information and the other relating to ethics in public life. In this age of information and technology, it is obvious that communication and exchange of information is a vital and indispensable means of strengthening the forces of integration. We can carry credibility as public men at national and international levels only by maintaining high standards of probity. I am confident that our deliberations will facilitate sharing of our experiences on the Conference Agenda and will provide insights into how our parliamentary institutions are addressing the issues subsumed in the Agenda.

I have immense pleasure in placing on record my deep appreciation of the excellent arrangements made by His Excellency, Mr. Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, our host and his band of efficient and courteous officers.

Thank you.

INDIA AND BANGLADESH — STRENGTHENING BILATERAL COOPERATION*

It gives me immense pleasure to extend a warm welcome to your Excellency, and to the distinguished members of your Delegation on my own behalf and on behalf of the people and Parliament of India. We are delighted to have you in our midst. I hope you had a pleasant stay in our country.

Excellency, both historical and geographical factors have bestowed on our two countries a very special relationship. For centuries, our peoples have lived in a common political, cultural, civilisational and ethno-linguistic matrix. Our relations are now characterised by deeper understanding and mutual trust. Our aspirations and goals are similar. We have together endeavoured for peace, cooperation and progress in the region.

The inextricable linkages between our nations provide a strong and stable foundation for our friendly relations. We have found amicable solutions to major bilateral issues such as the sharing of the Ganga water and Tin Bigha corridor and cooperated in the repatriation of the Chakma refugees. We entered a new era of closer relations with the launching of a bus service between Calcutta and Dhaka. On its inaugural day, the 19th of June this year, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina welcomed the bus in Dhaka. I hope that the bus service is a precursor for restoration of communication links that used to exist about 35 years ago. The restoration of these links will further improve people-to-people contacts. Today, immense opportunities are unfolding before us for strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, transport, technology, investment and many other sectors. I am sure our relations will attain newer dimensions and greater heights in the times to come.

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Bangladesh Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Mr. Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, New Delhi (14 August 1999).

We are happy that Bangladesh has successfully carved out a rightful place for itself in the comity of nations. Dynamic foreign policy initiatives have earned Bangladesh the goodwill of nations from far and wide. Its contribution to peace and stability in South Asia is highly appreciated. The very idea of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was mooted by Bangladesh. SAARC has come a long way since its inception in 1985 and has established an environment for greater cooperation in South Asia. We should seek to build on this so that our countries can face the challenges of the modern era together. This will also help accelerate socio-economic development in our countries and help in further promoting friendship, amity and understanding among our peoples.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that parliamentary democracy has taken deep roots and is successfully functioning in our two countries. Right from the valiant liberation struggle, people's power has been a major force in Bangladesh. Political awakening and quest for freedom have been vital factors in resurgent Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh have re-established the parliamentary system through the 11th and 12th constitutional amendments early this decade and strived to regain its vibrancy and strength. Political life in Bangladesh reflects the dedication of members of Parliament, political parties and leaders to the cause of parliamentary democracy. I am confident that liberal democracy, secularism and constitutional principles will flourish in Bangladesh.

As parliamentarians, we must endeavour to ensure good governance and welfare of our peoples. We, in India, are deeply committed to making parliamentary democracy more responsive by taking it to the grass roots, ensuring greater accountability and wider participation, transparency in governance, freedom of media and an independent judiciary. The recently enacted 13th constitutional amendment in Bangladesh providing for a neutral Caretaker Government during General Elections has been noted by us with interest.

Excellency, I hope that your Delegation will find this visit very useful as it was an occasion to interact and exchange views with a cross section of Indian leaders and people. I am sure your visit will help expand inter-parliamentary cooperation which is mutually beneficial in pursuing bilateral ties, sharing our concerns and conceiving new initiatives, besides further strengthening our bonds of friendship. We look forward to more parliamentary level interactions.

May I now request you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in a toast to the health of His Excellency, Mr. Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, the Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad, and the distinguished members of the Parliamentary Delegation from Bangladesh, to the prosperity of the people of Bangladesh and to the evergrowing friendship and cooperation between India and Bangladesh.

Thank you.

INDIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC — NEW BONDS*

It is my great pleasure to extend to Your Excellency and the distinguished members of your Delegation a warm welcome on behalf of the people and Parliament of India. The occasion is particularly special, considering the fact that this is the first visit to India of a Czech Parliamentary Delegation after the dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia. We consider parliamentary contacts as an important dimension of our political ties. Such contacts, we believe, offer opportunities to appreciate each other's concerns, objectives and priorities. I hope your visit will go a long way in laying a strong foundation for regular interaction between our Parliaments and parliamentarians.

Excellency, despite a great geographical distance, the Czech Republic and India have always had close ties. The history of Indo-Czech relations shows that cultural relations between our peoples are deep rooted, dating back to centuries. We, in India, appreciate the popularity Indian culture enjoys in the Czech Republic. The Czechs have always evinced keen interest in Indology, Indian languages, religion and culture. Interest in Sanskrit, in fact, goes back to the 19th century, when scholars like Schleicher, Vanicek and Zubak made valuable contributions to Sanskrit philosophy and to the history of Vedic literature. Works of Kalidasa, Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand and many others have already been translated into the Czech language. We are, indeed, very happy to know that the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences has recently published a Czech-Hindi dictionary. The contacts and cooperation between our countries throughout the decades have developed greatly.

Excellency, our bilateral relations have been steadily growing in diverse spheres. The visit of President Havel to India in February 1994 was an important milestone in our bilateral relations. The State visit of our Hon'ble

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Czech Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Mr. Vaclav Klaus, President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, New Delhi (10 March 1999).

President to the Czech Republic in October 1996 reaffirmed India's desire at the highest level to strengthen our multi-faceted bilateral cooperative ties even further. It is satisfying that the momentum then generated has been sustained. I am confident that our exchanges at all levels will further intensify in the future.

Excellency, we in India have watched with keen interest the remarkable changes that have taken place in your country. We appreciate the progress that the Czech Republic has made in the consolidation of its democratic polity. These developments have forged new bonds of friendship based on our shared democratic values, beliefs and aspirations.

The Czech Republic has been one of the leading trade and economic partners of India. We note that the economic component of our bilateral ties is increasingly receiving greater attention. However, considerable potential still exists to deepen and diversify the Indo-Czech trade and economic ties. The contacts between the business communities of our two countries are being actively promoted for mutual benefit. I note that a large Czech Business Delegation is also visiting India along side your visit. The interest shown by the Czech industry to enter into joint ventures in India is, indeed, encouraging. We look forward to closer and mutually beneficial economic cooperation between our countries in the coming years by taking full advantage of the various opportunities that exist.

Excellency, India and the Czech Republic have similar views on many issues in international politics towards strengthening world peace and resolving outstanding issues amicably. We appreciate the Czech Republic's understanding and support at the bilateral level for India's stand on a broad based expansion and reform of the Security Council. The process, we believe, should be guided by democratic principles and the realities of today's global situation.

Excellency, exchange of Parliamentary Delegations between countries goes a long way in strengthening people-to-people contact. Therefore, we have been looking forward to your visit to further strengthen our ties. I am sure the parliamentarians of our two countries would not be lagging behind in contributing in their own way in further consolidating the traditional friendship and cooperation between the two countries and peoples.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now request you to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency, Mr. Vaclav Klaus and Mrs. Klausova and other hon'ble members of the Czech Parliamentary Delegation, to the progress and prosperity of the peoples of India and the Czech Republic and to the long standing friendship between our two countries.

Thank you.

INDIA AND FRANCE — TRADITIONAL FRIENDS*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, Mr. President and other distinguished members of your Delegation to India. I am happy that you have given us the privilege to have you with us today. Your visit gives us yet another opportunity to renew the friendship and understanding between the parliamentarians and the peoples of India and France.

Excellency, the contacts between our two nations date back to several centuries. We are bound together by history and tradition. Our political, economic, commercial and cultural linkages are of long standing. In various parts of our country, you can still see evidences of the historic and continuing relationship between our countries.

Since India's Independence, the bonds of friendship between the two countries gained strength and found expression in an increased people-to-people cooperation. This decade began with a year-long 'Festival of France' in India. That Festival had, in fact, given an opportunity to the people of our country to have a feel of the richness and diversity of French culture. It also played a significant role in deepening our friendship and understanding and in bringing our peoples together. Besides, exchange of visits at various levels in recent years has further contributed towards consolidation and strengthening of our friendship. Early this year, during our Republic Day Celebrations, we have had the honour to have your President, Hon'ble Jacques Chirac, as our Chief Guest.

We have several lessons to learn from your experiences in economic development. The Government of India, with its stress on economic liberalisation, has taken several policy initiatives to make matters simpler for foreign investors. There exists a great scope for expanding the areas of cooperation between us. Being a leading member of the European Community,

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the French Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Mr. Laurent Fabius, President of the National Assembly of France, New Delhi (15 September 1998).

France is also in a position to help us in having greater access to the Common Market and for further increasing our trading relations with the European Community.

Excellency, our endeavour has always been to promote democracy, peace, stability and friendly relations among nations. Our nuclear policy has also been based on our firm commitment to work with all like-minded countries to bring about a nuclear weapons-free world. Our approach, in general, to disarmament treaties is that they should be multilaterally negotiated, comprehensive in scope, universally applicable, non-discriminatory in character and backed by an effective verification regime. We believe that pursuing discriminatory policies, ignoring the rationale and security compulsions of other countries, cannot help in bringing about genuine nuclear disarmament in the world.

India believes in resolving every contentious issue through dialogue. We firmly believe that terrorist tactics and violence cannot solve any problem. State-supported terrorism is threatening democracy in many parts of the world. We should make collective endeavours to contain this menace. We greatly value the understanding and objectivity demonstrated and the moral support extended by France on several occasions in matters of vital concern to India. India and France, committed as we are to democracy, peace and development, could further cooperate with each other in bringing about a just, equitable, peaceful and a genuinely democratic world order. Today, in the changed international environment, it is imperative that the United Nations and other world agencies are transformed in tune with the times and made more democratic in their structures and functioning. We are looking forward to constructive support and cooperation from friendly countries like France in realizing these objectives to our mutual advantage and to the larger good of the world.

Excellency, I am confident that your current visit here would help in further consolidating the understanding between our two countries and serve to extend and enrich cooperation in various fields. I welcome you all once again to our country. We do hope that you will carry home with you pleasant memories about India and its people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now invite you all to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency, Mr. Laurent Fabius and other distinguished members of the Delegation and to the ever-growing friendship and cooperation between our peoples.

Thank you.

INDIA AND GREECE — SHARED CULTURAL HERITAGE*

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you at the inauguration of the Art Exhibition of Greek Photography. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers for having invited me here and enabled me to share some of my views with you on this occasion.

Friends, the words India and Greece stir deep emotions in the hearts and minds of all those who think about human history, civilisation and roots of culture for the world as a whole. Our cultural contacts are very ancient and the two peoples have interacted in various ways in the past. The Gandhara School of Art is by and large a result of the interaction between the Indian and Greek art forms. As this movement of art owes its genesis and growth to a particular geographical region known as Gandhara, it came to be recognised as the Gandhara art. There were historical reasons responsible for the contacts that got established between Indian and Graeco-Roman schools of art. In the process of political and other developments emerging in the respective geographical regions, the Greek traditions of art got percolated to the Indian artists who amalgamated these two distinct streams to suit their indigenous needs and traditions. The Gandhara school bears an unmistakable impact of Graeco-Roman art, which gave it a new form and content.

Friends, India is also an inheritor of a long and rich tradition of art and culture like Greece. India is proud of the fact that art is a living force here as a part of the day-to-day life of its people. When we see old houses, when we see old materials, when we see folk art and folk dances, we realise the richness of Indian art as contained in the daily life of her people. If we study the long history of Indian art and its creative evolution, we realise how in each age a new and characteristic art has arisen. Since Independence, Indian art has greatly expanded and grown. It has grown in strength, in variety and in confidence.

*At the inauguration of the Art Exhibition of Greek Photography along with the President of the Greek Parliament, H.E. Mr. A. Kaklamanis, New Delhi (22 February 1999).

Art is a potent medium for forging unity and promoting a feeling of oneness among the people of a country as well as among people belonging to various countries. Besides, it is a vehicle of change. A thing of art transcends the narrow barriers of race and religion, caste and creed, history and geography. Therefore, it is necessary for us to encourage art and culture and thus enrich our lives. We cannot ignore the fact that life will become soulless and devoid of all beauty, charm and grace if it is divorced from appreciation and enjoyment of art. Needless to say, art should not only entertain, but also inform, educate and motivate people—the connoisseur and the common man alike. It is the duty of artists to bring people together and fill their lives with higher and nobler social aims.

The value of an exhibition such as this one is not merely in the numbers who come to see it, but in the kind of people who come to see and enjoy it. A thing that often strikes people when they go to art exhibitions these days is the similarity in the works coming from countries with vastly different cultural backgrounds. There seems to be a stream of consciousness about the unity of mankind in our minds. Today, there is far greater mutual understanding and awareness than ever before amongst the peoples of the world.

With these words, I have great pleasure in jointly inaugurating the Art Exhibition of Greek Photography with the President of the Greek Parliament and hope that it will evoke a warm response and bring the peoples of our two countries still closer.

Thank you.

INDIA AND HUNGARY — NEW VISTAS OF CO-OPERATION*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you Mr. Speaker and other distinguished members of your Delegation to India. I am happy that you have given us the privilege to have you with us today. Your visit provides us yet another opportunity to renew the friendship and understanding between the parliamentarians and peoples of India and Hungary.

Excellency, the close ties of friendship and cooperation between India and Hungary are deeply rooted in the history and culture of our two countries. Continuous cultural contacts and mutual interest in our respective languages, literature, philosophy, religious practices, dances and arts have always constituted an important element of Indo-Hungarian relations. The Indian tales of the *Panchatantra* and the *Jatakas* were rendered into Hungarian long back. Some of the famous Hungarian painters were associated with the Indian kings of the pre-Independence years. It was the half-Hungarian, Indian painter Amrita Shergil who introduced modernity into Indian painting. She also helped in a big way in promoting Indo-Hungarian contact and co-operation in the cultural and literary spheres.

One of the greatest Indian literary names, Rabindranath Tagore had visited Hungary as early as in 1926. It has also been a matter of great honour for India that since 1873 an Indology Department has been an integral part of the famous Budapest University. This has helped significantly in understanding and appreciating each other's culture. The Indian students also greatly value the opportunity they get to learn the Hungarian language here, as also the opportunities our people are getting to experience Hungarian culture through the Hungarian Cultural Centre which is located in the heart of Delhi.

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Hungarian Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Mr. Janos Ader, Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, New Delhi (8 March 1999).

We have been having fruitful cooperation in various other fields as well. Hungary is one of our important economic partners in the region. The economic transformation of Hungary in recent years has opened up several new opportunities for Indian business and for collaborative ventures between our two countries to our mutual advantage. There is still considerable scope for strengthening Indo-Hungarian economic co-operation. Today, the conditions in both the countries are favourable for expanding trade and investment. Being proximate to the European Community and with easy access to the emerging markets of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Hungary is in a special position to help India expand its trading relations with the countries of that region also. The Indo-Hungarian Joint Commission could take up the initiatives in this regard.

Excellency, over the years, we have been able to build up strong political relations also. In recent years the changes in political scenario of Hungary have only helped in further consolidating our time-tested relations. Hungary and India are united in opposing terrorism, in defending democratic values and in protecting and promoting fundamental human rights across the world. There may be issues on which we have differing perceptions and approaches. But our ultimate objective is the same and that is to bring about a peaceful and equitable world order.

Our endeavour has always been to promote democracy, peace, stability and friendly relations among nations. We are also committed to bring about genuine nuclear disarmament in the world. However, our approach to disarmament treaties is that they should be multilaterally negotiated, comprehensive in scope, universally applicable, non-discriminatory in character and should be accompanied by an effective verification regime. India also believes that it is imperative that existing world bodies be transformed in tune with the changes in the Post Cold War world order. It is important to ensure that universally accepted democratic norms should guide their structures and functioning. India and Hungary, committed as we are to democracy, could work together to achieve these objectives.

Excellency, I am confident that your current visit here would help in further deepening the understanding between our two countries and serve to extend and enrich cooperation in various fields. I welcome you all once again to India with the hope that you will carry home with you pleasant memories about India and its people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now invite you all to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency, Mr. Janos Ader and Mrs. Ader and other distinguished members of the Delegation and to the ever-growing friendship and co-operation between our peoples.

Thank you.

INDIA AND IRAQ — WARM FRIENDSHIP*

On behalf of my Delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to thank you for the very cordial reception. Indeed, we are deeply touched by the hospitality extended to us.

Excellency, we had the privilege of receiving you in India last December. In promoting mutual understanding between our peoples, we parliamentarians, as people's representatives, have an important role to play. Our visit to your country, I am sure, will go a long way in further strengthening India-Iraq relationship.

India and Iraq are the lands of the world's ancient civilizations. Our two countries evoke deep emotions in the hearts and minds of those who think about human history, civilization and cultural heritage. We have had a long history of friendly relations dating back to several centuries. Both India and Iraq have lived through various triumphs and tragedies and shared so many hopes and aspirations together since time immemorial. Recent years have witnessed exchange of high level visits between our two countries. Relations between our countries have been broad-based and close. Both countries are committed to the policy of non-alignment.

India and Iraq share a common perception on several regional and global issues. We stand for the promotion of world peace and understanding. India fully shares the concern of the global community for peace, stability and security in the Gulf region. We are concerned about the human sufferings caused due to the economic hardships faced by the Iraqi people, particularly children and women. Sensitive to the humanitarian needs of Iraq, India has, as a very humble gesture of goodwill, contributed food and medicines to alleviate the hardships. Excellency, I recall with pleasure my visit to Baghdad in 1994 when as a member of an Indian Delegation, I had the privilege to

*At the Banquet hosted by H.E. Dr. Saadoon Hammadi, Chairman of the National Assembly, Iraq in honour of the Indian Parliament Delegation, Baghdad (24 August 1998).

come to your country for providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq in the form of medicines.

India has striven to cooperate with Iraq by offering scholarships to Iraqi students in Indian colleges and universities under the Programmes of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and facilities for training of Iraqi technical personnel in Indian scientific and technical establishments under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme. The corporate world of India has also been participating in Iraq's "Oil for Food" Programme.

Excellency, as you are aware, recently India conducted nuclear tests in the light of a deteriorating security environment in our region resulting from nuclear and missile proliferation. India has long been a victim of externally aided and abetted terrorism and militancy. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my country's resolve not to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country. These are weapons of deterrence to ensure that India is not subjected to aggression. I would also like to make it clear that India does not intend to engage in an arms race. We are firmly committed to friendly and cooperative relations with all our neighbours and the rest of the world.

India's commitment to the cause of global nuclear disarmament remains firm and unqualified. We have always been in the forefront of the quest for world peace. Our foreign policy is based on national consensus that a non-discriminatory and universal elimination of nuclear weapons will enhance our security as well as that of other nations of the world.

Excellency, I hope that this visit of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation to Iraq will help in further consolidating the traditional friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now request you to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency, Dr. Saadoon Hammadi, to the progress and prosperity of the people of Iraq, to the friendship between India and Iraq and to the cooperation between the Indian Parliament and the National Assembly of Iraq.

Thank you.

INDIA AND JAPAN—PEACEFUL AND PROGRESSIVE RELATIONS*

I am very pleased to extend on behalf of the people and Parliament of India a very hearty welcome to our distinguished guests from Japan.

In the last week of October, I had the honour of calling on His Excellency Mr. Ito, Speaker of the House of Representatives and His Excellency Mr. Watanabe himself in Tokyo on my way home from New Zealand after attending the 44th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. I recall the warmth and hospitality extended to me by the Excellencies during that visit. The Mayor of Hiroshima received us at the Hiroshima Museum even on a Sunday. That was an extraordinary gesture which I cannot forget.

Asia is the cradle of some of the earliest civilisations of the world. Major religions of the world originated here. As two important Asian countries, India and Japan have had long historical ties. Buddhism, and through it, the Indian culture had reached Japan centuries ago. Gautama Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi are two of the greatest apostles of peace known to mankind. We share a common commitment to world peace and non-violence. Our other common values include respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Through the passage of time, our societies have preserved our traditional roots. We believe in and practice democracy of the parliamentary type. A strong and free media is an essential part of our way of life. Japan has also been highly perceptive of India's emotions and sensitivities. This is exemplified by the preservation of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's ashes at the Rinkoji Temple, Tokyo, which I had the honour of visiting.

Your Excellency, a short while ago, we in India completed celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our Independence and our democracy. Over the years, we have made a great success of our parliamentary institutions. We have evolved

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Japanese Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Mr. Kozo Watanabe, Vice-Speaker of the House of Representatives, New Delhi (24 November 1998).

the system so as to suit the needs of our developing society. We have further tried to strengthen our democratic base at the grassroot level of village panchayats by giving them constitutional status and functions.

There have been exchanges between our two countries at the Government level—at the level of Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, etc. But this visit of Your Excellency Mr. Watanabe, is a matter of special significance for us as it is taking place after a gap of nearly two decades since the last Japanese Parliamentary Delegation visited India in 1979. Your visit has a vital bearing on recharging the bilateral relations at the parliamentary level, between our two vibrant democracies in Asia. As you would recall, while in Tokyo I had also invited His Excellency Mr. Ito, to make yet another separate visit to India. It is my pleasure now to renew that invitation. The cooperation between our two Parliaments needs to be further strengthened. The setting up of Parliamentary Friendship Associations in Tokyo and New Delhi represents a major step in this direction.

Economic relations between our two countries are quite vital. Our annual two-way trade at present is valued at over US \$ 5 billion. Since 1991 when we started our economic reforms, Japanese investments in India have risen to over US \$ 1.5 billion. Japan had been India's largest bilateral donor till recently. She has also been India's second largest trading partner and third largest investor after USA and Switzerland. More than anything else, it is Japan's strategy of economic growth which has an important lesson for India. Japan has closely interacted with industry, generated export surpluses and made massive investments abroad.

The strengths of India are a stable democracy, plentiful natural resources, broad agro-industrial base, skilled human resources, dynamic business leaders, liberalising economy and an ever expanding capital and consumer market. There is thus, enormous potential for the growth of Indo-Japanese economic cooperation from strength to strength for mutual advantage. We should build up this cooperation between our two countries further through uninterrupted and multi-faceted exchanges—Government to Government, Parliament to Parliament, industry to industry and people to people. I have no doubt that we shall build up our cooperation accordingly, because our historical relations have been singularly free from conflict of interests, hostile approaches and ideological differences.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have great pleasure in calling upon you to raise a toast for the health, happiness and well-being of His Excellency, Mr. Watanabe and for the prosperity of the peoples of India and Japan.

Thank you.

INDIA AND MONGOLIA — HISTORICAL BONDS*

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Gonchigdorj and the distinguished members of his Delegation, on my own behalf and on behalf of the people and Parliament of India.

Excellency, relations between India and Mongolia go back into the distant past stretching over 1500 years. The spread of Buddhism to Mongolia through Central Asia and the visits of monks from your country to the ancient Nalanda University in search of knowledge and spiritualism laid the foundations of our deep-rooted ties. Neither the great Himalayan ranges nor the vast deserts of Takla Makan could obstruct this process. The settlement of Mongoloids at the foothills of the Himalayas and North-Eastern India has further enriched our own rich and diverse cultural heritage.

In the more recent past, the historical bond enjoyed by us has been further cemented by a commonality of views and convergence of mutual interests on various issues. India's contribution in obtaining international recognition for Mongolia and espousal of the cause of its admission to the United Nations and the Non-Alignment Movement and the spirit of understanding shown by Mongolia on various issues are pointers in the same direction. The people of Mongolia have a tremendous fund of goodwill for India and the same is reciprocated by our people.

The peaceful democratic revolution of 1990 has further opened up Mongolia to the outside world. There have been regular exchanges of high-level visits between our Governments and Parliaments over the years. With each such visit, the ties between us have grown stronger. They are bound to get strengthened further in the background of the opening up of the Mongolian economy to the outside world.

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the visiting Mongolian Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Mr. Radnaasumberel Gonchigdorj, Chairman of the State Great Hural, New Delhi (30 November 1998).

In February 1994, during the visit of the President of Mongolia, His Excellency P. Ochirbat to India, a Treaty of Friendly Relations and Co-operation was signed which provides for co-operation in various fields. During that visit, an Agreement on establishment of a Joint Committee on co-operation in political, economic and various other fields was also concluded.

In the contemporary era of globalisation, Indo-Mongolian relationship has a vast scope for expansion within the framework of this Treaty and Agreement. Both our countries could well be partners in progress, leading to a mutually rewarding friendship. In recent years, the two countries have co-operated in the areas of small scale industries, agriculture, natural calamity management, health and medical sciences. India has also been a participant in the "Tokyo Donors Meeting on Mongolia".

In recent years, India has also had the opportunity to co-operate with Mongolia by supporting her significantly in human resource development under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Training Programme. We are very happy that the Rajiv Gandhi Vocational Training Centre in Mongolia is extending training facilities to the Mongolian youth in developing them as technicians in various disciplines. The successful functioning of the Indo-Mongolian Friendship Forum in Darkhan is a shining example of our countries' resolve to co-operate with each other for the betterment of our peoples. And this is what should guide us in the years ahead.

By regular interaction, fresh areas of co-operation could be identified and innovative programmes established by Mongolia to avail of India's expertise in natural resource utilisation and management.

For over three decades now, India and Mongolia have had a very strong cultural interaction under a Cultural Exchange Agreement. The Indian Cultural Centre in Ulaanbaatar has also become a vibrant institution. We recall with lovely feelings, the several programmes organised in Mongolia in the context of the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence.

May I now request you Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in a toast to the health of His Excellency, Mr. Radnaasumberel Gonchigdorj, Chairman of the State Great Hural, to the distinguished members of the Mongolian Parliamentary Delegation, to the prosperity of the Mongolian people, and to the ever-growing friendship and co-operation between India and Mongolia.

Thank you.

INDIA AND MONGOLIA IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM*

It is a matter of honour for me to be here at the Conference on "Indo-Mongolian Partnership Beyond 2000 A.D.", organised by the Mongolian Embassy and the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Historical and cultural relations between India and Mongolia have been very significant as evidenced by the presence of Mongolian racial stock in the Himalayan borderland, and the references to Indian epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayan* in the folklores of the Mongols are a pointer towards active and rich Indo-Mongol relations. The ushering in of Buddhism in Mongolia made our ties far more intimate. Thus, the love, affection and friendship that exist between the peoples of our countries are a result of centuries of close interaction. It is a matter of great joy and satisfaction that even today, the peoples of India and Mongolia maintain these ancient relations to our mutual benefit.

It is significant to note that soon after gaining Independence, India was the first country outside the Socialist bloc to establish diplomatic relations with Mongolia in 1955. Since then, prominent leaders and scholars of both countries have exchanged visits. These exchanges have helped immensely in promoting mutual understanding and further strengthened friendly relations between our two countries. And we greatly appreciate the fact that Mongolia has traditionally valued India's role in international affairs. All along, Mongolia has shown keen understanding and generally supported India's position on various international issues.

India and Mongolia hold similar views on most of the problems confronting mankind today. As members of the Non-Aligned Movement, we have been working together to ensure equity in all respects for the developing nations. For furthering the cause of peace and international security, globally

*At the inauguration of the conference on "Indo-Mongolian Partnership Beyond 2000 A.D.," New Delhi (2 December 1998).

as well as in Asia, our countries have been working in close cooperation within the framework of the United Nations and other international organisations. For combating crimes, including terrorism, we have raised our voice in various international fora and are still continuing this fight actively.

In recent years, following the collapse of Communism in the erstwhile USSR and the emergence of pluralist democracy, Mongolia has entered a new phase in its onward march to progress and prosperity. During this period, India too embarked on a programme of restructuring its economy with a view to achieving greater integration with the global economic system. Thus today both our countries are walking along similar paths, sharing similar experiences.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the relations between our countries are now directed towards benefiting from each other through increased co-operation in various spheres, including political, economic, scientific, technical, educational and cultural fields. Several Indian companies are currently participating in international tenders floated by Mongolia. The Indo-Mongolian Friendship Forum in Darkhan is researching on cold-resistant and high yielding varieties of wheat and potatoes.

The Indo-Mongolian cultural affinity which existed since time immemorial received a further fillip with the implementation of the Indo-Mongolian Cultural Exchange Programme signed way back in the early sixties. India has always been responding positively to Mongolian appeals for providing funds for disaster relief and offering other humanitarian assistance. The setting up of the Rajiv Gandhi Vocational Training Centre in Ulaanbaatar has been another step in cementing our bilateral relations.

During the last few years, our relations have also gained considerable momentum through the exchange of several high level visits. The Presidents of both countries have paid official visits. Our Vice-President visited Mongolia in 1996 and last year, my predecessor, Shri P.A. Sangma also visited Mongolia. Several Ministers from both countries have also paid visits which led to the signing of many agreements and identification of new avenues of co-operation. I am sure, continuing such exchange of visits will further reinforce the bonds of friendship and co-operation between us in future.

Friends, Indo-Mongolian relations have been expanding quite satisfactorily over the years. It is my strong belief that with improved technological capabilities and better communication systems, we could work together towards making this relationship stronger in future. What we need for this is planned initiatives, ideal networking and competitive ventures. For more

realistic and continuous appreciation and understanding of the problems and positions of our two countries, both sides must ensure from time to time that contemporary issues, changing situations and evolving policies are well understood.

Politically, we need to work together, exchange ideas and co-ordinate strategies on issues of mutual concern, particularly on matters that impinge on us both as developing countries. For championing the cause of development, peace, security and co-operation, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, we need to stand steadfast.

Beyond 2000 A.D., India and Mongolia would have many opportunities to exploit in several areas for mutual benefit. We have to tap on a variety of goods and services which can be exchanged profitably. India would be more than happy to share her expertise and experience in various spheres.

I am sure that this Conference, attended by policy makers, development planners, and trade and business representatives from both countries, will go a long way in furthering the close and cordial relations that exist between our two countries.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Conference.

Thank you.

INDIA AND MOROCCO – ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS*

It is an honour for me and the members of my Delegation to visit the Kingdom of Morocco. I bring with me the warm greetings of the people and Parliament of India to the people and Parliament of Morocco. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the warm hospitality extended to me and the members of my Delegation.

We have followed with great interest the recent General Elections in Morocco. We appreciate the democratic pluralism that has taken deep roots in Morocco under the pragmatic leadership of His Majesty, King Hassan II. India has gone through twelve general elections and has just concluded the Golden Jubilee celebrations of our Independence and parliamentary democracy.

India and Morocco are ancient countries with great traditions of culture which have been manifested in their own unique styles of social systems, architecture and music. Our two countries are proud to retain our historical traditions and cultural heritage; at the same time we have always been open societies ready to welcome new ideas and absorb them into our own ethos to further enrich them. Our firm cultural foundations and our capacity to evolve without abandoning our traditions have given both our countries great stability and social peace which are essential in our endeavour to modernise our societies and bring progress and prosperity to our peoples.

Mr. President, the relationship between India and Morocco is historical as well as very special. The great Moroccan traveller, Ibn Batuta, came to India in the 14th century. The chronicles of this great traveller have thrown much light on our history of the times.

Your Excellency is, no doubt, aware of the long struggle of Indians for independence and the great impact this struggle had throughout the colonised world. It is also well-known that free India had expressed its sympathy and support for Morocco's aspiration for freedom as it had with the other colonised countries of Asia and Africa.

*At the lunch hosted by H.E. Mr. Abdelwahed Radi, President of the Majlis An Nuwab, in honour of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation to Morocco (8 October 1998).

We deeply appreciate the internal and external policies of His Majesty, King Hassan II. In particular, we are appreciative of the harmonious relations that exist between Muslims, Christians and Jews in Morocco. We in India also believe in this kind of secular life.

Both our countries have always worked together in pursuit of peace and development, especially through the Non-Aligned Movement and as members of the G-77 and share similar perceptions on important global issues. The contributions made by His Majesty King Hassan II for peace in West Asia are well-known. West Asia is close to us geographically as well as historically. Peace in this region is of vital interest to India. We in India had welcomed the Middle East Peace Process as a courageous step. Lately, we have been deeply concerned with the stalled Middle East Peace Process. We maintain that all the understandings and agreements reached as part of the Peace Process must be adhered to and implemented forthwith without any pre-conditions.

Excellency, based on our assessment, of our own security environment in the context of nuclear and missile proliferation, we had to undertake nuclear tests in May this year. Besides, India has long been a victim of externally aided and abetted terrorism and militancy. However, I would like to reiterate my country's resolve not to use these weapons for aggression or for mounting threats against any country. My country does not intend to engage in an arms race. We are fully committed to friendly and cooperative relations with all our neighbours and the rest of the world, even as we have built a credible deterrence.

Lastly, as a forward looking society, India is ready to share her experience and expertise with the friendly people of Morocco. We are convinced that the developing countries of the world should come closer in the spirit of South-South cooperation and only such an interaction can help promote the living standards of our people.

We are also keenly looking forward to the visit to India of His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince of Morocco. This visit is bound to be a landmark in the political and economic relations between our two countries.

May I now raise the glass and propose a toast to the health of His Majesty King Hassan II, His Excellency, Mr. Abdelwahed Radi, growing friendship between India and Morocco, closer interaction between the Parliaments of the two countries, and to the prosperity and well being of the people of Morocco.

Thank you.

INDIA AND PORTUGAL — BOUND BY HISTORY*

It is, indeed, a great pleasure for me to extend a warm welcome to you and to the distinguished members of your Delegation, on my own behalf and on behalf of the people and Parliament of India. The occasion is particularly special because this is the first ever interaction at the parliamentary level between our two countries. The people of Portugal are renowned for their friendliness and hospitality. I assure you that you will experience the same feelings reciprocated during your sojourn here.

Portugal, like India, has a glorious past. Interactions between our countries date back to several centuries. For India and its people, having visitors from Portugal is not a new experience. In modern times, we have had several exchanges at the highest level. We recall the visit of Dr. Mario Soares in January 1992 as the Chief Guest at our republic Day Celebrations. In September this year, our President Shri K.R. Narayanan visited your country and had very fruitful and meaningful discussions with the Portuguese leadership. There have also been several Ministerial level visits.

We are, indeed, happy that having traversed the long march of history, the Portuguese people are looking confidently to the future. We have noted with keen interest that the Portuguese economy, reinforced by the large infrastructural investment programmes in transport, telecommunications and other sectors, is marching towards greater integration with the global economy. We highly appreciate the fact that today it is a fast growing industrial economy with an attendant increase in the average growth rate of Gross Domestic Product. It is also praiseworthy that the employment scenario in Portugal is one of the most cheerful in Europe.

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Portuguese Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Dr. Antonio De Almeida Santos, President of the Portuguese Parliament, New Delhi (15 December 1998).

Friends, you would agree that today the shrinking distances have pulled all regions of the world together and led to greater inter-regional dependence. The good old maxim of cooperation has assumed even more importance in such a context. Relations between India and Portugal have remained close and friendly. The process of bilateral consultations between us was formalised by the signing of the Protocol on Foreign Office Level Consultations in 1995.

It is a matter of satisfaction that bilateral trade between India and Portugal, though small in volume, has been growing steadily over the years. Further expansion and diversification in this field would depend upon intensification of interaction between the business communities of the two countries. We believe, and I am sure you would agree, that there is considerable potential for Indo-Portuguese joint venture projects in the two countries. We are also of the view that there is a substantial scope for joint venture projects in third countries, especially in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa. We are confident that the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement signed during the visit of our President Shri K.R. Narayanan to your country will herald a new era in our trade relations. By providing for lower rates of tax, the agreement is bound to impart a fresh impetus to exchange of investments, technology and trade and services between the two countries. We look forward to Portuguese cooperation with India in the textile and clothing sectors and are happy that your country is considering joint ventures with us in these crucial sectors. The Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement which is being finalised, we are hopeful, will prove to be another milestone in Indo-Portuguese cooperation. We are looking forward to the meeting of the Joint Committee set up under the Agreement on Trade, Economic, Industrial and Technological Cooperation which was signed in 1977.

We have been cooperating with each other in the cultural field too. Several Cultural Exchange programmes have been implemented under an agreement signed in 1980. It is a happy development that a new Cultural Exchange Programme for 1997-2000 was signed sometime back.

Friends, the consolidation of the system of parliamentary democracy in Portugal is proof of the triumph of the sovereign will of your people. As vibrant functioning democracies, we can consult and cooperate with each other towards promoting the cause of democracy and parliamentarism. The exchange of high level visits between the two countries has been rather limited. We eagerly look forward to more visits, particularly by Parliamentary

Delegations, which can go a long way in further cementing our friendly relations.

May I now request you Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in a toast to the health of His Excellency, Dr. Antonio De Almeida Santos, President of the Portuguese Parliament, to the distinguished members of the Portuguese Parliamentary Delegation, to the prosperity of the Portuguese people and to the ever-growing friendship and cooperation between India and Portugal.

Thank you.

INDIA AND RUSSIA — TIME-TESTED FRIENDSHIP*

I deem it a great honour and privilege to address the State Duma of the Russian Federation. At the outset, I would like to convey to the distinguished members of the State Duma the greetings and good wishes of the members of Indian Parliament, and of the nearly one billion people whom they represent.

We, in India, have always cherished the long-standing and deeprooted tradition of friendship, trust and confidence, which has characterised relations between our two countries. We regard it as a precious legacy to be preserved and built upon. It is particularly satisfying that our ties with Russia have not only endured the challenges of the post-Cold War era, but have strengthened and flourished in new directions. Our relationship is multi-faceted, encompassing economic and commercial ties, in important sectors like power, steel, oil, coal and information technology, as well as close cooperation in vital areas such as science and technology, atomic energy, space and defence. The tradition of high level exchanges between our two countries has contributed to the building up of our bilateral cooperation. We look forward to warmly welcoming the President of the Russian Federation on his state visit of India next month.

Excellency, today our countries also share an abiding commitment to democracy and common values and aspirations have brought us closer. We are particularly happy that there exists an excellent tradition of frequent exchanges and contacts between the Parliaments of our two countries. It is also satisfying that there is a consensus across the political spectrum in both India and Russia on the importance of maintaining good relations between us. We had the honour of welcoming Your Excellency in India last year and the current visit is in fact my second this year to your beautiful country. We also had the pleasure to host a visit last year by a group of young Russian Parliamentarians and to receive this September a Parliamentary Delegation

*Address to the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Moscow (13 November 1998).

led by the Chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs. Such visits have helped to further consolidate the close ties of cooperation between our Parliaments and imparted a new dynamism to our traditional friendship.

Excellency, our countries and civilisations have interacted closely over the centuries and our cooperation draws upon a long tradition of friendship and mutual understanding. Indian and Russian scholars and intellectuals have played a pivotal role in stimulating interest in each other's history, culture, language and literature. The events associated with the "Days of Moscow in Delhi" held in September 1998 were a grand success and the concept was warmly received by the people of Delhi. We look forward to the holding of "Days of Delhi in Moscow" in February next year.

In the commercial and economic fields, we are taking steps to expand further our cooperation and exploit untapped potential. Over the years, the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation has become the prime vehicle for promoting cooperation in areas within its mandate. The signing on 21 June 1998 of a Supplement to the Agreement on the construction of a 2x1000 MW nuclear power station at Kudankulam, in Southern India, adds yet another important dimension to our cooperation. We look forward to further strengthening our close, friendly and mutually beneficial partnership with Russia on a sustained and long term basis.

Excellency, the Moscow Declaration on the Protection of the Interests of Pluralistic States, which India and Russia signed in June 1994, addressed the threats posed to our countries by terrorism, religious extremism, separatism, and national exclusiveness, and placed our bilateral relations within the broader framework of the mutuality of our concerns and national interests in the post Cold War period. As large heterogeneous societies that cherish their diversities, India and Russia face similar challenges and tasks. It is, indeed, satisfying that India and Russia share a common perception and identity of views on most international issues. Through joint efforts we can contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security, the democratisation of international relations, as well as to the establishment of a just and stable world order.

Excellency, with non-alignment as the cornerstone of its foreign policy, India remains committed to the development of friendly, cooperative and mutually beneficial relations with all countries, including each of its neighbours. As we approach the new millennium, our common endeavour has to be to make the world a better and more secure place for present and

future generations and to promote a non-exploitative international order based on justice and equity. Commitment to economic development, eradication of poverty and reduction of global inequalities must be indispensable elements of a world order based on non-violence and renunciation of the use of force. We are convinced of the necessity to build a multipolar global structure based on sovereign equality of all nations and peoples, democratic values and justice. We look forward to a world, free of military blocs and alliances, where cooperation and consultation rather than confrontation and coercion would characterise interaction between countries.

Excellency, on its part, India has consistently condemned international terrorism and expressed shock and sorrow over the tragic loss of innocent lives that it led to. Having ourselves been the victim of State sponsored, cross-border terrorism in its most heinous form, this is an issue of particular concern to us. We have repeatedly emphasised that what is required to tackle the menace of international terrorism is not selective unilateral action, but an effective international cooperative effort to identify and act against those responsible for this menace—whether individuals, groups or States.

Excellency, in May 1998 India conducted a limited series of five underground nuclear tests on its territory. Those tests were essential for ensuring a minimum, credible nuclear deterrent for India's national security. India has since announced a voluntary moratorium on further nuclear tests and has offered to move towards a *de jure* formalization of such an obligation. I would like to emphasize that India does not wish to unravel the existing non-proliferation regime. Moreover, as a responsible nuclear weapon State committed to non-proliferation, India is totally against the transfer of nuclear weapons or related technologies or know-how to others. We also have no intention of entering into a nuclear arms race with anyone. I may also add that our tests do not signal a dilution of India's long standing commitment to the pursuit of global nuclear disarmament in a time bound perspective.

Excellency, at the start of this decade, Russia embarked on a historic course of political democratization and structural reform. We are convinced that the efforts of the Russian people towards building a bright future will be crowned with success. We believe that Russia's unity and integrity, strength and stability, security and prosperity meets our own interests.

In conclusion, Excellency, I would like to take this opportunity to convey the strong sentiments of goodwill and affection that exist in India for the people of Russia. I am convinced that our countries can look forward with confidence to a comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnership in the decades ahead.

Thank you.

INDIA AND TURKEY — HISTORIC TIES*

As we arrived in your beautiful country, we heard of the earthquake that has struck southern Turkey. We share your sorrow at the loss of life due to this tragedy and extend our deepest condolences and sympathies to the families affected.

Mr. President, our congratulations to the Turkish Parliament, Government and the people of Turkey on the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish Republic this year. It is a great honour for me, and for India, to address this august Assembly on this auspicious occasion.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the founder of modern India, who always regretted not being able to meet the great Atatürk, spoke of his sentiments in these words:

“What has been done in Turkey can be done in India. But it can only be done in the manner of Kemal Pasha by fearlessly facing obstacles and removing them...”

Friends, historically and culturally India and Turkey have much in common. Modern Turkey and modern India share the ideals of democracy and secularism. Our relationship in recent times got further strengthened by the visits of Prime Minister Turgut Özal in 1986, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1988, President Shanker Dayal Sharma in 1993 and President Süleyman Demirel in January 1995.

We were honoured to have the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly at the commemorative session of our Parliament on 15 August 1997 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our Independence. We greatly appreciate the setting up of the India Friendship Group in your Parliament. We would be reciprocating this gesture by forming a Turkey Friendship Group in our Parliament.

*Address to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Ankara (30 June 1998).

India has a huge population of one billion with the world's second largest Muslim community besides a large number of Christians and followers of other faiths. Thus we are a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic society. Secularism is a matter of survival for our country, and co-existence a matter of faith.

Friends, I will briefly touch up on India's nuclear perspective in the aftermath of our nuclear tests. No nation can compromise with its security. However, let me state quite categorically that India remains committed to disarmament which is global, universal and non-discriminatory. Our nuclear tests were intended to reassure the Indian people on the security of the country and to carry forward the technical prowess of our scientists.

The voluntary moratorium announced by the Indian Government after the tests bears ample testimony that we do not target any country. We remain committed to developing harmonious relations with all our neighbours. Our commitment to India's eternal message of peace and goodwill is abiding.

Mr. President, I thank you and the members of this august Assembly for your generous and warm welcome and for giving me this privilege to share some of my thoughts with you. We will make every effort on our part to further the cause of friendship with your great nation.

Thank you.

INDIA AND VENEZUELA — COMMON CONCERNS*

It is my pleasure to extend to Your Excellency and to the distinguished members of your Delegation, a warm and hearty welcome on behalf of the people and Parliament of India and on my own behalf. More than a decade has passed since a Parliamentary Delegation from either country has paid a visit to the other. We are particularly happy to receive you in the 50th year of our Independence. The people and Parliament of India greatly appreciated the solemn session organised by the Permanent Commission on External Relations of the Venezuelan Parliament to mark the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. We reciprocate in full measure the warm sentiments expressed in the Resolution moved on the occasion. I sincerely hope your sojourn here would be fruitful and you would cherish happy memories of your visit on your return.

India and Venezuela have a great commonality in history and culture. Both our countries have suffered from long colonial domination, though at different times and under different circumstances. Close parallels exist in our struggle for national emancipation and in our aspirations to be masters of our destiny. In this context, the two names that come first to our mind are those of the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi and the Great Liberator of Latin America, Simon Bolivar. During our freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi taught us the full meaning of independence and the need to maintain a system of values both at the national and international levels. Venezuela was equally fortunate in having Simon Bolivar, to inspire her people with his noble deeds and ideals.

Our two countries are not only bound by strong historical ties but are close to each other in many other areas. Both India and Venezuela are wedded to the policy of peaceful co-existence and non-alignment. We have also been working closely in world forums like the United Nations. In our efforts

*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Venezuelan Parliamentary Delegation led by H.E. Deputy Julio Castillo, New Delhi (9 July 1998).

towards building a just global economic order, we, as members of the G-15, have been striving relentlessly against economic exploitation in all its manifestations.

Friends, although bilateral cooperation between our two countries so far has indeed been satisfactory, avenues of expanding such cooperation should be continuously explored. I understand that Venezuela has offered India its expertise in oil exploration as well as in refining heavy crude oil. Further, in promoting mutual cooperation in all aspects of the hydro-carbon sector, the two countries have agreed to set up a Joint Working Group to work out modalities in areas like setting up of joint ventures for operation in either country and also in the third world countries. India's exports to Venezuela consist mainly of textile garments, finished leather, industrial alcohol, betonite, etc. We have also been having fairly regular ministerial exchanges. Last year, the Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs of Venezuela visited India in March followed by the visit of the Hon'ble Vice-Minister of Energy and Mines in November. We had signed a bilateral cultural agreement way back in 1984 and a related programme in 1993. An MOU on bilateral consultations was also signed during the visit of the Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs of Venezuela in March 1997. The sustained efforts being made by the two countries to broaden the basis of cooperation are undoubtedly heartening.

Excellency, our democracy, which is the largest in the world, has many unique characteristics. It has stood the test of time, remained successful and uninterrupted for fifty long years. At the political level, for sometime now, we are facing situations wherein the electorate has been returning hung Parliaments, necessitating coalition arrangements. But what is important is that political succession continues to be peaceful despite changes in the fortunes of political parties. In the process, democracy has struck firm roots on the Indian soil and democratic institutions continue to be vibrant and stable.

Friends, as you are aware, recently, India had to go in for nuclear testing in the light of a deteriorating security environment in our region, resulting from nuclear and missile proliferation. Our concerns in this regard, which we have been articulating forcefully, did not receive the attention which it should have got, especially considering India's unwavering commitment to peaceful co-existence. In our neighbourhood, we have been witness to the accumulation of nuclear weapons and introduction of sophisticated delivery systems. We have also been victims of externally aided and abetted terrorism for long. In such a scenario, we were constrained to go in for nuclear testing only because of our genuine security concerns. Subsequently, we have announced that India would now observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting

nuclear explosions. We have also indicated our willingness to move towards a *de jure* formalisation of this declaration. We are also extremely keen to discuss outstanding issues with our neighbours but only on a purely bilateral basis.

Excellency, exchange of Parliamentary Delegations between countries goes a long way in strengthening people-to-people relations. We have been looking forward to this visit of our Venezuelan friends for a long time. I hope, we parliamentarians of the two countries would not be lagging behind in contributing in our own way to further consolidate the traditional friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

May I now request you all to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency Deputy Julio Castillo, to the progress and well-being of the friendly people of Venezuela and to the growing friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

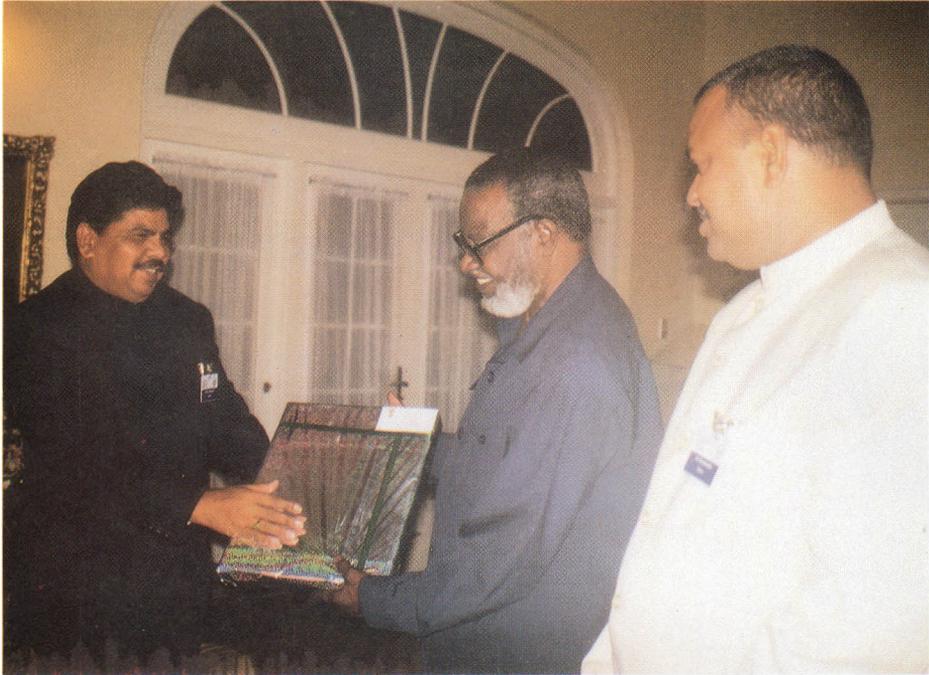
Thank you.



With HE King Hassan II of Morocco



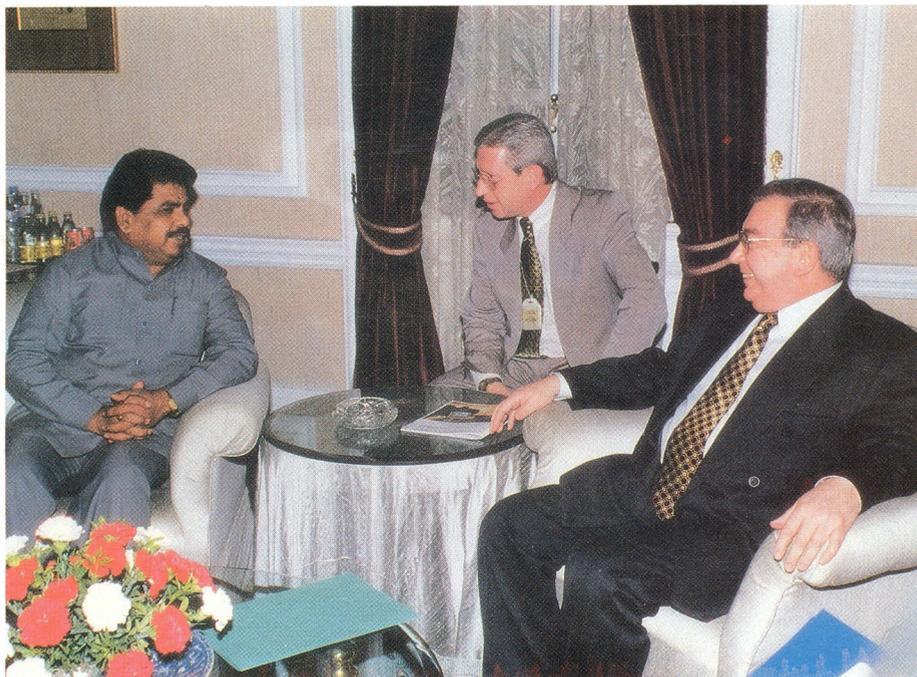
With the President of Iraq, HE Mr. Saddam Hussein, Baghdad



With the President of Namibia, HE Dr. Sam Nujoma



With the Prime Minister of Morocco, HE Mr. Abderrahmane El. Yousseoufi



With the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, HE Mr. Yevgeny Primakov



With the Speaker of the *Jatiya Sangsad* of Bangladesh,
HE Mr. Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury



With the visiting Parliamentary Delegation from Canada



With the President of French National Assembly, HE Mr. Laurent Fabius



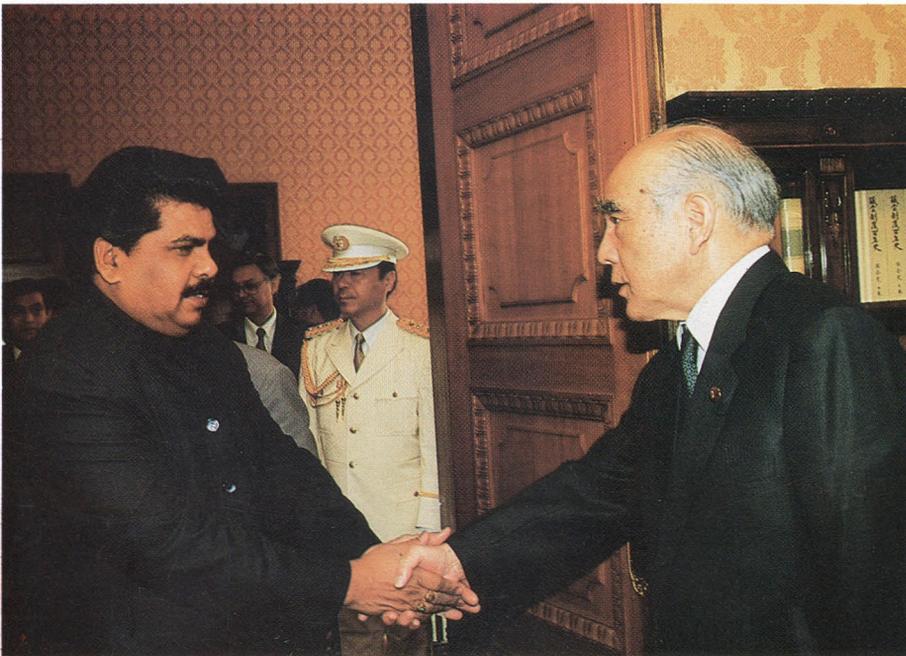
With the visiting Parliamentary Delegation from France



With the Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, HE Mr. Janos Ader



With the Speaker of the National Assembly of Iraq, HE Dr. Saadoon Hammadi



With the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan, HE Mr. Soichiro Ito



With the Chairman of the State Great Hural of Mongolia, HE Mr. R. Gonchigdorzj



With the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Morocco,
HE Mr. Abdelwahed Radi



With the Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia,
HE Mr. Mose P. Tjitendero



With the Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan,
HE Mr. Illahi Bukhsh Soomro



With the President of the Portuguese Parliament, HE Dr. Antonio De Almeida Santos at a cultural programme, New Delhi



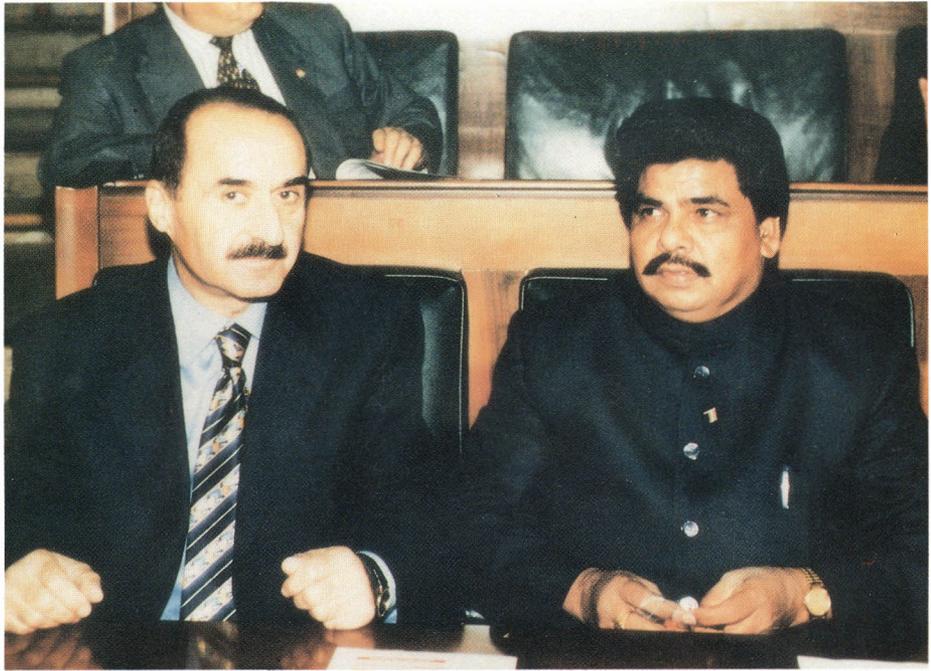
With the Speaker of the State Duma, HE Mr. Gennady Seleznev, at the inaugural of the exhibition 'History and Activities of Parliament of India', organised by the PMA in Moscow



At the banquet hosted in honour of the visiting Russian Parliamentary Delegation



With the Chairman, Federal Council of the Russian Federation,
HE Mr. Yegor S. Stroyev



With the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly, Turkey, HE Mr. Hikmet Cetin



With the leader of the visiting Parliamentary Delegation from Venezuela, HE Deputy Zulio Castillo



With the visiting Parliamentary Delegation from Vietnam



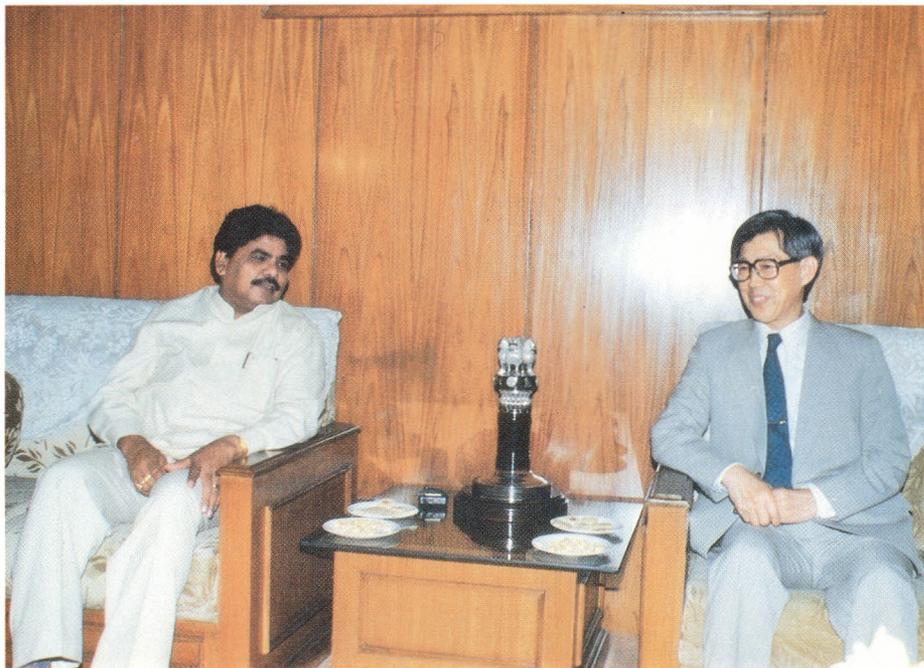
With the visiting Parliamentary Delegation from Zambia



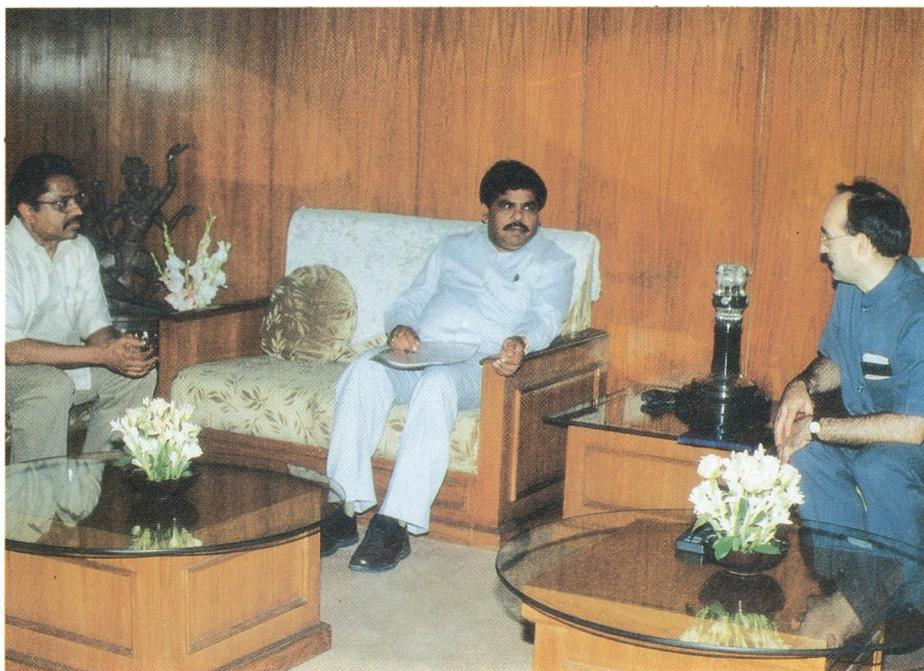
With the Vice-Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan,
HE Mr. Kozo Watanabe



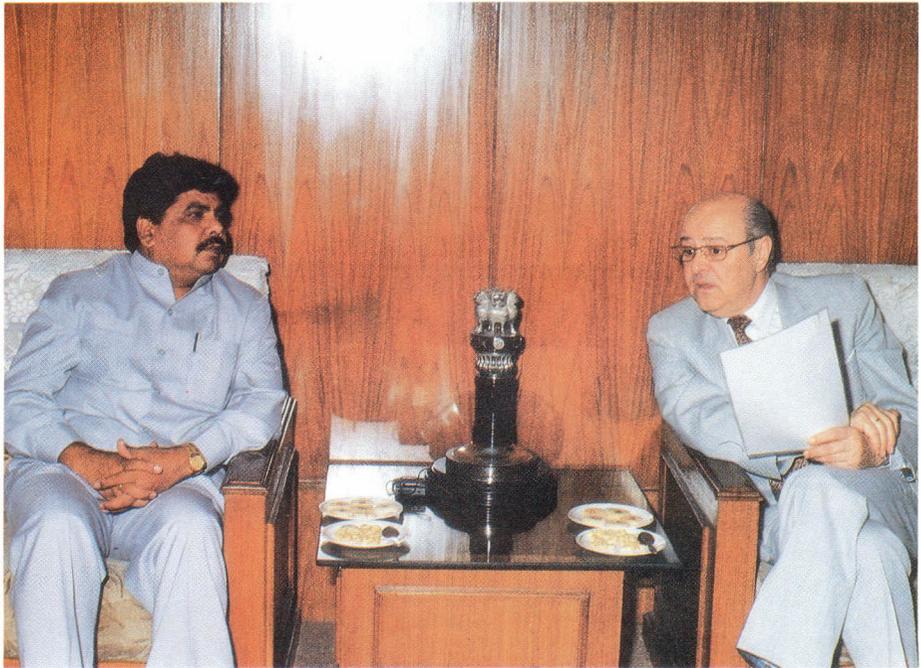
With the Chairman of Russian-Indo Friendship Group,
HE Dr. Anatoly I. Lukyanov



With the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, HE Mr. Rei Yuan Ying



With the Ambassador of Croatia, HE Dr. Doago Stambut



With the Ambassador of Russian Federation, HE Mr. Albert S. Tchernyshev

IX
MISCELLANY

AN ALUMNUS COMES HOME*

It gives me great pleasure to be here among the students of the Andhra University. As I stand before you, my mind is flooded with sweet memories of my student day life on this campus, not long ago. There is a saying in English — “Once a student always a student”. Today, I feel like a student in your midst.

During my long stay on this campus, there were many occasions when important dignitaries came to address the student community. I used to attend those events like others, sitting quietly in the crowd. Little did I realise then that one day I would be the subject of felicitation on this very dais. Today, I am elated with a strange sensation that I am able to spend some time with the student friends of this famous university. This is the university where the likes of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Sir C.R. Reddy held fort as Vice-Chancellors. This is a great seat of learning which has produced many eminent men and women who rose to high positions and served society in various walks of life. Even though I am the second Andhraite to have become the Speaker of Lok Sabha, this is not the first time that a product of Andhra University held high public office. There is already a legacy and high tradition before me and I have only to follow it.

Friends, the Telugus are naturally elated over my elevation to this office. It is a position I have not sought after. In fact, positions have come to me without my seeking them, very early in my political career. I have become Zilla Parishad Chairman, East Godavari, member of the 10th Lok Sabha, MLA, Minister for Higher Education in Andhra Pradesh and now Speaker, Lok Sabha. Whatever position I am assigned to, I am committed to the principle of doing an honest and efficient job without attracting unnecessary attention. The work one does must be felt by the people concerned than be read in newspaper columns by people unconcerned. This has been my philosophy.

*At the felicitation function organised in his honour by the students of Andhra University, Waltair, Visakhapatnam (17 August 1998).

People from different parts of the State are showering me with their love and affection, happiness and enthusiasm by organising felicitations, etc. All I say on these occasions is that I shall work hard to enhance the name, fame, prestige and reputation of the Telugu people and their culture in the eyes of the nation. But, to you what I promise is that I shall strive to live up to the high standards of the Andhra University, whatever may be the position I hold.

This is a premier institution of higher learning in our State. When there were only three universities, the entire coastal belt was covered by the Andhra University. So, its intellectual influence was pervading the width and breadth of the Andhra coastline from Vizianagaram to Ongole. Now you are the proud heirs to that influence. By your dedication to studies and conduct, you must preserve the prestigious legacy of the Andhra Vishwa Kala Parishad.

I know this is not an occasion for sermons. But, as a former student and a friend of yours, I should emphasise the need for holistic education. Swami Vivekananda once said: 'Education is not the amount of information put in the mind which runs riot undigested all through our lives. It is a process of life building, character forming and man making assimilation of ideas'. For this besides reading books we must keep our eyes, ears and the mind open to observe the phenomena around us, understand the situations around us and learn from the people we meet, to enrich our perspective and develop our personality as mature and complete persons.

We must keep our minds open to noble thoughts and novel ideas. Then we will be able to build a new society and a brave new nation. Your role is pivotal in this process and I wish you all the very best in all your endeavours.

Thank you.

HONOUR TO A FORMER RESIDENT*

I am really overwhelmed by the reception that has been accorded to me by the people of Visakhapatnam. I do not know how to express my feelings at the lavish praise that has been showered on me.

I consider myself to be fortunate that I had my higher education in this city. The people of Visakhapatnam are lucky, for they live in a city which is so beautiful. It is perhaps the most ideally situated sea-side town in India. It has a lovely beach. It is a booming business centre with many industrial establishments. It is also famous for the fine work of its artisans. It has a strategic importance as the Headquarters of the Eastern Naval Command is located here. I am delighted to be here once again.

By electing me the Speaker, the members of Lok Sabha have bestowed a great honour on me. As you know, the office of the Speaker is one of great honour and responsibility. The Speaker is expected to uphold the Constitution and be guided by its letter and spirit in the conduct of the business of the House. In this task, the Speaker needs the support of all members irrespective of their political affiliation and ideology.

As you all know, the conduct and behaviour of the Speaker is under close scrutiny. The Speaker's primary duty is to protect the rights of the members and to uphold the dignity of the House. As free debate is vitally important for parliamentary democracy, the Speaker endeavours to do his best to promote this objective. Members may have different opinions and views on various matters. But, on one thing all of them are agreed, and that is the progress and prosperity of the nation and welfare of the people. This should also be the aim of all of us regardless of our regional, linguistic and religious identity.

In any polity, public life is a means of service to the masses. Their welfare has to be our ultimate concern. All our institutions, including Parliament,

*At the felicitation organised by the people of Visakhapatnam in his honour (17 August 1998).

have to be instruments of social change and service to the masses. We should not ignore the fact that the real India lives in its villages. Unless we provide a fair deal to them, no system, plan or ideology can succeed.

Friends, our country is passing through a critical phase. Despite progress in various fields, we are confronted with the problems of poverty, unemployment, socio-economic disparities, etc. Needless to say, we have to urgently tackle these problems, so that our masses could have a dignified existence. Without offering a dignified existence for our teeming millions, our progress has no real meaning.

Therefore all those who are occupying important positions have a duty to strive for the progress and prosperity of our society so that our long-suffering masses could have a ray of hope about future. I would appeal to the elite of this city to be sensitive to the problems of the poor and contribute to the overall development of this area which has given us so much.

Before I conclude, I would like to once again thank the people of Visakhapatnam and the organisers of this function for the honour accorded to me.

Thank you.

A CITY HONOURS ITS FRIEND*

I feel delighted to be here once again amidst the people of Visakhapatnam.

The love and affection showered by you has moved me considerably. It is, indeed, a great honour for me to be felicitated by the people of this historic city on my assumption of the office of Speaker, Lok Sabha. The fact that the elected representatives of the people have considered a humble person like me worthy of this exalted position really made people feel proud of our parliamentary democracy. What really makes us happy about our democratic polity is the equality of opportunity it affords to even the humblest of the humble. Today, they can aspire for and actually occupy the highest of political and administrative positions in the country. In response to your felicitations, I can only say that I shall strive hard to come up to the people's expectations and uphold the trust and confidence which they have reposed in me.

The city of Visakhapatnam has got a special significance in my life. As I studied here in the university and acquired knowledge, I feel deeply attached to the place. Therefore, whenever I get an opportunity, I come here to meet and interact with my fellow citizens. I assure you that I shall continue to work for the all-round development of not only the city of Visakhapatnam but also of this region and our State as a whole.

Friends, this place is well-known for its lovely beaches, booming business, upcoming industries and the fine craftwork of its artisans. It is a matter of great happiness that in its pursuit of developing and promoting tourism in the State, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has chosen this town to transform into one of the best tourist attractions not only in the State but in the country as a whole. While commending the efforts of the Government in this respect, I feel that there is more scope for further development of the beaches of this city. I hope the Municipal Corporation of Visakhapatnam would do well to grow more trees in and around the area to promote

*At the function held to felicitate him, Visakhapatnam (1 September 1998).

afforestation and add picturesqueness to it with a view to attracting more and more tourists.

As we all know, Parliament in our democratic polity occupies a pivotal place. It is the supreme legislative and deliberative body of the country which not only represents the sovereign will of the people but also reflects their hopes and aspirations. It is also the custodian of the people's rights and liberties. One of its important functions is to offer meaningful advice, guidance and suggestions to the Government in accomplishing its goal of all-round development of the nation. In this task, the role and contribution of every member of Parliament is crucial.

Even though we are one of the oldest civilizations and we are one nation in spite of linguistic and ethnic diversities, economically we are a backward society where a substantial number of people have still to achieve the minimum subsistence level. Despite having made considerable progress since Independence, we have still to provide them with basic necessities of life such as food, safe drinking water, clothing and shelter. A large number of our youth, in spite of being able-bodied, adequately qualified and willing to work, are either totally unemployed or under-employed. Creating gainful job opportunities for them is a stupendous task which has to be achieved at all costs, so that their talents and energies could be effectively channelised towards realising the goal of national reconstruction. Another major national issue we are confronted with is that of illiteracy. Even after fifty years of Independence, 'education for all' is a distant dream for us. A sizeable chunk of our population is still not able to even read and write. As an instrument of socio-economic transformation, Parliament has to set an agenda for the country to quickly overcome these problems, so that it could attain its rightful place in the comity of nations.

Friends, as a constitutional functionary and as the Presiding Officer of the Lok Sabha, it is my duty to see that Parliament functions effectively for meeting the needs, hopes and aspirations of the people. In fulfilling this task, I shall try to emulate my worthy predecessors and follow the path laid down by them.

Before I conclude, I once again express my sincere thanks to the people of this city, more particularly those associated with the organisation of this function. On my part, I assure you that I shall always cherish the sweet memories of my pleasant association with the people of Visakhapatnam. I have no hesitation in saying that I am simply overwhelmed by this gesture.

Thank you.

HONOURING SON OF THE SOIL*

It is, indeed, a matter of great pleasure for me to be among you today. I feel proud of the fact of being one of you and being a son of the soil. Like you, I am equally concerned that our region should achieve a high level of economic and industrial development.

Friends, we belong to an area which contributes substantially to the development of our State as well as the country. Our population is mainly agriculturists and I am happy that I also belong to this fraternity.

Friends, sugar industry is essentially an agro-based one. As this area is one of the highest fertile regions in the State and for that matter in the entire country, there is a tremendous potential for agro-based industries to grow here. Therefore, I appeal to industrialists to make all possible efforts to bring about all round development in this area by opening more and more agro-based industries. This will not only help in generating employment for the local youth but will also ensure overall economic and industrial development.

There is no doubt that the role of industrialists in the development of economy is crucial. However, a responsibility also lies on them to cater to the social needs by undertaking various welfare activities. I am happy that the industrialists of this area, besides contributing to the development of this region, are also engaged in other important activities like constructing hospitals, etc. Such activities need encouragement, support and recognition from all quarters.

Andhra Pradesh has a lot of potential and infrastructural resources for industrial growth. However, there is much more scope for the development of industrial infrastructure and it is high time that we took concrete steps in that direction. The entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh should take full advantage of the available infrastructure and also the facilities being provided

*At the Civic Reception held in his honour, Tanuku, West Godavari Dist. (12 August 1998).

by the Central and State Governments in this regard and help in the ultimate task of national reconstruction.

Before I conclude, I would like to say that I am touched by the love and affection shown to me by the people of this area and the organisers of the function and express my sincere thanks for doing me this honour and for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you all.

Thank you.

A TRIBUTE TO VELUVOLU*

It gives me immense pleasure to be amidst a galaxy of distinguished persons here this evening. And I find it a great honour to be asked to felicitate these three eminent persons. When I was aspiring for a career at the Bar, Justice Sambasiva Rao was already a towering figure on the bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. As a legal luminary, distinguished jurist, eminent educationist and erudite scholar, his name and fame have spread far and wide. As Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, as Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University and as Lokayukta, Shri Sambasiva Rao has distinguished himself and left behind a legacy worthy of emulation by younger generations. He played a key role in setting up the first Mahila University in Andhra Pradesh during the Chief Ministership of late Shri N.T. Rama Rao.

Shri V.P.B. Nair is a conscientious police officer, known for his impeccable integrity of character and devotion to duty, besides being an avid writer and a keen researcher. It is a rare example of the gun and the pen going together. He has written many novels, two of which have been picturised in Telugu and Malayalam. Shri Nair has currently undertaken the onerous task of compiling Telugu-English and English-Malayalam dictionaries, running into ten volumes. A varied interest for a police officer, I congratulate him on his book 'Ventade Needalu' which is being released here by Dr. Radhakrishna Murthy, the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University. I also congratulate my good friend, educationist, industrialist and former member of Parliament Shri M.V.V.S. Murthy for receiving the dedication of the book.

Smt. Sarada needs no introduction. She was, is and will continue to be a major force to reckon with in the film industry. Her sensitive portrayal of characters, especially those representing women's causes, earned her a permanent place in the hearts of men and women alike all over the South. She is the only actress who won the prestigious "Urvashi" award three times. She performed multifarious roles in a number of movies as a heroine, doctor,

*At the Veluvolu Trust Felicitations Function, Visakhapatnam (31 August 1998).

lawyer, judge, police officer, collector, mother, grandmother, etc., with equal ease and natural grace. Her pioneering contribution to the Telugu film industry is unforgettable. And as a member of Parliament, Smt. Sarada made a mark for herself in the Eleventh Lok Sabha. She continues to be active in the film industry and we are sure to see many aspects of her artistic talents in the years to come. I wish her long years of active life in art, social service and politics.

The Veluvolu Trust is doing a great honour to the memory of late Shri Veluvolu Suryanarayana and late Smt. Veluvolu Venkata Subbamma who distinguished themselves in the service of mankind, devotion to the motherland and dedication to preserve and propagate the rich heritage of Sanskrit and Telugu languages. Shri Suryanarayana, a product of the first ever Sanskrit school at Amrutaluru village in Guntur district, established under the inspiration of Tripuraneni Ramaswamy, rendered yeoman service to the cause of education, particularly Sanskrit.

I congratulate Shri Basavapunnaiah, the son of this noble couple and Managing Trustee of the Trust for undertaking this exercise of felicitating eminent people in honour of his departed parents. This Trust has also taken up social service activities. It has organised a Music Festival with Japanese artists here to foster international understanding. I wish him success in the future endeavours of the Veluvolu Trust.

I feel honoured to be associated with this function. I congratulate the three people who received the felicitation. I wish them long years of active and fruitful life.

Thank you.

OLD AGE HOMES AND NGOs*

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be amidst you on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the *Asaktha Poshaka Sabha*. Let me take this opportunity to thank the organisers for having invited me to inaugurate the Platinum Jubilee blocks constructed for providing shelter to destitute old age people and orphan children. Having completed seventy-five eventful years of its fruitful existence, the *Sabha* has attained a ripe age. I am immensely pleased to learn that it continues to work relentlessly and with renewed vigour in the service of destitute old people and orphan children.

Friends, in the process of human life, ageing is an inevitable phenomenon. It has been aptly said that adding years to life is meaningless if we cannot add life to years. The problems associated with ageing are very often due to inability to adapt to the physiological changes and attitudes and responses to their surroundings. What the older persons require is some self-esteem, love and care. A multi-pronged approach is, therefore, needed to deal with the problems associated with old age. Efforts should be made to instil confidence in them by ensuring proper medicare, and providing light jobs to those willing to and capable of doing such work. In this way we can help them to lead a purposeful life in the autumn of their lives.

Friends, the government is committed to the welfare and development of people in general and of vulnerable sections in particular. The Preamble, Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India stand testimony to the commitment of the State to its people. Governments — both at the Centre and in the States—have been introducing many schemes from time to time, for the benefit of the old by extending concessions to them. I am happy to note that non-governmental organisations besides the State Governments and local bodies are being encouraged to come forward and take up the cause by providing them

*At the inauguration of a hostel for the destitute old age people and orphan children, Bangalore (17 January 1999).

financial assistance and other initiatives with the help of specific Central grants being extended for the purpose.

Friends, our social and cultural ethos had ensured a secure place for the old and infirm. With a touch of pride, we could boast till a few decades ago, that the neglect of the elderly was a problem confined to the West. But with values changing fast in society, the break-down of the traditional joint family system resulting in the emergence of nuclear families, generation gap, growing urbanisation and an unbridled rise of consumerism have all contributed in some way or the other to the neglect of and apathy to our senior citizens.

Thanks to the advances we made in the economic and scientific fields during the last fifty years, the health and economic status of the aged have undergone tremendous changes. As a result, there has been an increase in the life expectancy of our people. The number of old people who have crossed the age of 60 years, as per the 1991 census, is over 56 million. Keeping in view the issues relating to senior citizens, the Government has initiated various programmes like old age pension, travel related concessions, old age homes, day care centres and mobile medical units. Given the increase in the number of older persons and the difficulties involved in dealing with the related issues, a National Policy for the Aged is also under the consideration of the Government of India. The policy, when formulated, would seek to ensure the well-being of older persons by attending to their financial security, health care, shelter, welfare and other developmental needs. The Ninth Five-Year Plan has also paid attention to welfare and well-being of the aged people and suggested effective ways and means to realise this goal.

Friends, in the ancient days we had *Vanaprasthashrams* to which elders went on their own volition. Today with fast changing values in society, the elderly persons, poorly fed and adversely treated at home are forced to look for shelter, food and clothing away from their kith and kin. This is so despite the legislative measures and more importantly the moral obligation on the children to take care of the aged. The problems of senior citizens, with some income of their own or no income at all, have therefore become too alarming and gloomy. Many elders prefer to be ill-treated at home than seek shelter in old age homes because of the social stigma attached to leaving one's own home. It is therefore the responsibility of social service organisations to not only take care of the elder persons in every possible way and to keep them happy, healthy and comfortable but also make efforts to rehabilitate the elders within their respective families.

Friends, it requires sensibility, tolerance and understanding to deal with both children and elderly persons. Elders may not like to be treated like children. Therefore, it requires a cautious approach. Besides food, clothing and shelter, older people also long for love. Life lives and longs for love. This is true even in the case of older persons and orphan children.

What is important today is the creation of awareness about the problems pertaining to old age among the children in urban areas and fast growing towns such as this. In my opinion, it would be beneficial if schools take their pupils around such old age homes. This would serve a dual purpose in the sense, that the elders can have the company of children and a social awareness among the children is generated at the same time. I am happy that this organisation is striving to achieve that dual objective by working for the welfare of both the orphan children and older people. This is how children can be educated about caring for the elderly.

The cause of orphan children has also been attracting the attention of sociologists and governmental and non-governmental organisations. It has been our experience that the children growing on the streets without home, family or parental care are particularly vulnerable to crime. In this context, it is highly appreciable that the *Sabha* is also running an orphanage for such children. By giving them free education upto tenth standard, an opportunity is being given to them to assimilate themselves into the mainstream of our society.

Care of the destitute older persons and orphan children should be looked upon as a social responsibility and not as a burden. The Government no doubt is doing its bit to ameliorate the conditions of these vulnerable sections. There is still scope left for organisations such as this *Sabha* and even philanthropists to serve these needy sections. This obviously requires significant amount of money and material by way of donations from individuals and organisations. The media, I feel, can play a vital role in highlighting the issues and problems relating to old age and orphan children, so as to create an awareness among the public, and enthuse them to come forward to help these sections either individually or through NGOs working for their welfare.

Friends, as you all may be aware, the year 1999 has been declared by the United Nations as the 'International Year of Older Persons.' It is, therefore, an occasion for us to focus greater attention to the problems of the elder persons.

I am glad that the *Sabha* has completed seventy-five years of its service to society in the 'International Year of the Older Persons.' I congratulate the *Sabha* on the yeoman services it has been rendering all these years under the inspiring leadership and guidance of its Governing Council and wish it more and more success in its future endeavours.

With these words, I am glad to inaugurate the Platinum Jubilee Ward and dedicate it to the service of the people of our country.

Thank you.

URBANISATION AND OLD AGE HOMES*

I am very happy to be here amidst you. It gives me immense satisfaction to know that an Old Age Home is coming up at Ravulapalem. And I feel privileged to lay the foundation stone of the Old Age Home Building. It is very appropriate that this facility is coming up at Ravulapalem which is centrally located in our district.

Friends, old age is a problem that must be adequately understood before we attempt to find solutions to it. When we had the joint family system not so long ago, old people were well cared for with respect and regard and love and affection, by the younger members of the family. It was a happy situation when grandparents lived in their natural habitat amidst their children, grandchildren and other relatives. The system offered them a great deal of protection and support. That was, indeed, a golden time for the old people.

However, with the collapse of the institution of joint family, the aged have been exposed to a host of problems. The nuclear family which came in place of the joint family system did not have any provision for taking care of the old. Yet, so long as married children lived in the village, parents had been taken care of by the nuclear families, even if by rotation. However, with urban migration picking up momentum in recent times, the problems of the old people became much more aggravated. They cannot migrate with the youngsters to the towns and cities. Yet, they cannot look after themselves beyond a certain age in the village. This has, indeed, created a big problem for them.

It is in this context that the concept of Old Age Home must be understood and appreciated. Old Age Homes are gaining wider acceptance in our cities as havens for the aged. Therefore, we, in the rural areas, must shed our inhibitions and promote the idea as it is very helpful to the aged. As housing becomes an acute problem in towns, the migrated families find it difficult to

*At the function to lay Foundation Stone for Old Age Home, Ravulapalem, East Godavari Dist. (29 January 1999).

accommodate the aged, even where there is a desire on the part of the children. In such a situation, Old Age Home is an excellent alternative. Old people find a great deal of comfort and solace in the company of other old people as their concerns are the same and they can easily relate to one another emotionally.

For our part, we must realise that what the aged need is not just food and shelter but emotional support from the near and dear ones. They must not be left to feel neglected in the twilight of their life. Without them, the society and the nation would not grow. Besides, we all become old one day; there is no escape from that. Unless we look after the aged in our youth, we will have no moral right to seek care when we grow old. Therefore, even when we put our near and dear ones in Old Age Homes for whatever reasons, we must make ourselves accessible to them by frequently visiting them during weekends, festivals and other social occasions. We must take up their maintenance as a moral responsibility. So far, Old Age Homes are run on charity basis. The offspring of the inmates must come forward to meet the cost of maintenance. That would help add life to the years than merely adding years to life by making basic amenities such as health care, sanitation, nutritious food, decent clothing, entertainment, etc. available to the inmates.

In the West, this is a popular idea which the old people have accepted with grace. There is no hesitation on the part of the aged to go to Old Age Homes. The young take care of the maintenance very gladly and keep in touch with them periodically. In our country, we need to make the culture of Old Age Homes spread across the society. As education and employment bring about mobility, one may not be able to take his parents with him wherever one goes. But we must make provision for the elderly in our way of thinking in moral and ethical terms than view them as an unavoidable burden. It means that we must internalise the culture of paid Old Age Home as a necessity of changing times.

I am sure this facility at Ravulapalem would be a success as the place has a rural ambience with urban amenities. Besides, it is easily accessible due to its strategic location. I hope the Home will turn out to be a proud institution at the Gateway to Konaseema. I congratulate the organisers for undertaking this noble project and wish them the very best in all their endeavours.

Thank you.

URBANISATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION*

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here amongst you all to lay the foundation stone for the Municipal Solid Waste Plant.

Environment, as we all know, is the concern of humanity as a whole today. The rapid, unprecedented and unplanned growth of industries without any provisions for wastage treatment has threatened the very survival of man. Though industries contribute to the development and progress of a nation, their waste and toxic effluents are doing irreversible and irreparable damage to mankind. Man is a part of nature and the destruction of environment means the destruction of man himself as both are closely linked. For sustainable development, it is essential that environment is taken care of, so that disturbances in the environment are minimised while the pace of development and economic growth continues unhampered.

Friends, environmental pollution has largely been the concern of developing countries with high population densities. Urbanisation has brought tremendous pressure on national resources leading to their fast depletion. The ever growing masses encroach into agricultural and forest lands and cause extinction and depletion of natural resources. They also generate large quantities of solid and liquid wastes. Our cities generate more solid wastes than they can dispose of effectively. Open dumping and uncontrolled land fills remain the main methods of wastage disposal in developing countries. The untreated disposal of wastage presents a potential danger for health as well as for the environment. In the recent past, in addition to solid wastes, there has been an increase in industrial and hazardous wastes. Industrial waste is not only proving a threat to the flora and fauna but by creating an imbalance in the eco-system, it is slowly endangering life itself.

*At the function to lay the Foundation Stone of Municipal Solid Wastes Plant, Rajahmundry (1 October 1998).

Wastes fall into two categories—organic and inorganic. Organic wastes can be found everywhere in urban and rural areas and are used as fertilizers. On the other hand, there are toxic wastes, petrochemical wastes, and plastic wastes which give rise to non-degradable polluting agents leading to health hazards. Traditional methods of treating wastes cannot solve the environmental problems of today. These days, industrial wastes are the main sources of environmental problems and there is a great necessity to plan their ecological management, based on the principle of the three 'R's, *i.e.* Reduction, Reutilization and Recycling. Recycling not only reduces pollution and saves energy and resources but also saves on possible health expenditure.

Waste management is thus a permanent challenge that has to be dealt with in order to achieve sustainable development. Nature is God's gift to man. It is also the instrument of life, prosperity and growth. Man should make use of land, water, air, etc. and at the same time he should also protect them.

The setting up of the Rajahmundry Organic Manure Plant with the Wind-Rows technology is a step towards ensuring a cleaner environment. From the city's solid wastes, this plant, I am told, can produce organic fertilizer in the minimum possible time. This will provide valuable organic fertilizer for the farming community and will also promote cleanliness and greenery of the area.

I congratulate the Rajahmundry Municipal Corporation on introducing this new concept for better soil, health and town atmosphere. I would also like to congratulate M/s Finline Financing and Leasing Limited who have set up this Organic Fertilizer Plant and will market the produce as *Bhusanjeevini*. They deserve encomiums for taking the initiative of introducing this new technology in Rajahmundry. The company, I hope, will grow from strength to strength with each passing year.

Thank you.

CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS — SUCCOUR TO THE DISTRESSED*

It gives me immense pleasure to be with you all today. I take this opportunity to thank Shri Satyanarayana garu, Managing Trustee of the Sunkara Satyanarayana Pragati Charitable Trust, for inviting me to the felicitation function to honour the distinguished personalities chosen for awards this year. I would also like to extend my warm felicitations to all the awardees for their achievements in different fields and hope that they would continue to enrich our society by their excellent work.

Shri Sunkara Satyanarayana garu, founder of the Trust, is a renowned freedom fighter, who participated in the Quit India Movement, when he was still a student. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Ranga, he has tirelessly worked for the cause of the poor, the downtrodden and the farmers. He was a member of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council; he has served as Chairman of the Krishna Zilla Parishad and contributed much to the development of the district.

Friends, it is indeed a matter of satisfaction that the Charitable Trust founded by him is playing an important role in the developmental sphere. In the new liberalised scenario, the Government encourages such endeavours in finding solutions to various problems and meeting various unforeseen situations. The cooperation of voluntary and charitable organisations is very important in supplementing the Government's efforts in the context of welfare measures. Besides implementing various programmes of social significance, these organisations carry out literacy drives, create awareness among people about the burning problems of the day and develop a self-help movement. Over the years, our experience has shown that voluntary organisations have always helped the needy and provided relief to the distressed sections of society. In this direction, the work being done by Mother Teresa's Mission

*At the function organised by the Sunkara Satyanarayana Pragati Charitable Trust to felicitate eminent personalities, Vijayawada (9 August 1998)

will always be remembered as an example worth following by charitable institutions the world over.

I am happy to know that ever since its inception, the Sunkara Satyanarayana Pragati Charitable Trust has been honouring eminent personalities every year for rendering yeoman service in their respective fields. The Trust has honoured many personalities belonging to such diverse fields and literature, fine arts, music, politics, judiciary, administration, journalism, social service, etc. It is all the more important that it has been organising felicitation functions on 9th August which is a day of great importance for us. It was on that day in 1942 that the Quit India Movement was launched by Gandhiji. I appreciate the excellent work being done by the Trust and congratulate all those associated with it for their thoughtful endeavours.

Friends, I am privileged to honour the chosen celebrities by conferring upon them the awards instituted by the Trust and hope that they would further excel in their respective fields. My heartiest congratulations to all the awardees.

Thank you.

CABLE OPERATORS — THE LAST MILE*

Cable Television operators are "at the last mile", as the electronic media industry describes their status — that is, they are the last link with the consumer, the viewer of television. We have, in India, 60 million TV homes. Of them, 20 million homes avail of cable TV services. Since the Gulf War, cable service has grown in popularity and expanded its network in a big way. There are about 80,000 cable operators in the country today, employing directly or indirectly about one million persons. In Andhra Pradesh, there are about 10,000 operators. With such a vast clientele and employment capability, cable operators naturally occupy a very vital position in the service industry and in the economy of the country.

Technology, particularly fibre optics technology, is overtaking the world of communication. This has revolutionized the electronic media industry as well. An attendant and consequential development in the West is what has come to be known as convergence of services—that is, convergence of many services through the same optical fibre cable. In USA, most telephone companies are getting into service through cables. In UK, on the other hand, cable companies are getting into "telephony". In these countries, cable operators are getting to provide Internet service using fibre optics technology. Cellular and Basic telephone service operators also use the same technology now. It facilitates carriage of any number of channels and any volume of data.

This kind of convergence of services is not yet taking place in India. On the one hand, telecommunication authorities give licences for telecommunication circles. Anybody is free to undertake cable operations on the other. All that is required for cable operation is registration in the nearest post office under the Cable Networks Act by a simple payment of Rs. 500. There needs to be coordination and convergence at the Government of India level between the Ministries of Information and Broadcasting and

*At Cable Tech.-99 Workshop-cum-Exhibition on the "Role of Cable TV Operators in Providing Internet and other Data Services", Vijayawada (25 January 1999).

Telecommunications. The policy on Internet also has to be streamlined. Like in USA, telecommunication and broadcasting, including cable operation, should be brought under one regulatory body. In that country, the umbrella body is the Federal Communications Commission. In Malaysia, different telecommunication bodies are being brought together.

All over the world, the story of cable operators is one of the big fish eating up the small ones—that is, cable operators are being brought under business compulsion to align themselves with major operators, particularly those who have access to the state-of-the-art technology. This has started happening in India also. The interests of our cable operators, particularly the smaller ones, need to be protected and they should not be allowed to be exploited.

It is also a fact that a majority of cable operators in our country do not have adequate investment capabilities. This affects the quality of service rendered by them. However, they should do their best to improve the quality of service within the available means. Otherwise, in the increasingly competitive environment, the consumers themselves will reject them. On the other hand, if they improve their quality, they will have a definite place in our highly stratified market in which different sections of viewers have different spending capabilities.

While I appreciate that cable operation is basically a commercial activity, the operators should also think of supporting the role of Doordarshan as a public service broadcaster. If they show public service programmes, they may be in a position to carry credibility with the public. This is also important from a business point of view.

I hope that this Cable Tech. - 99 Workshop-cum-Exhibition would be a very fruitful forum for exchange of views, sharing of experiences and analysis of future business trends and consumer service expectations. I wish the cable operators a Happy New Year and all success in their business ventures. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Workshop-cum-Exhibition.

Thank you.

DALIT LITERATURE — NEED FOR ENCOURAGEMENT*

It gives me pleasure to be here amidst you to release *Dalita Sahitya Tatwam* written by Shri Sikhamani. As a poet, he is too well-known in the literary circles. He has now entered the portals of literary critique and he is growing steadily as a mature critic.

Sikhamani's contribution to the growth of the Dalit literary movement deserves all round approbation. Dalits are a people who have been marginalised in every walk of life since ancient times for no fault of theirs. They have been made to suffer indignity, humiliation and discrimination wherever they went. Therefore, they did not go anywhere and did not have much interaction with others. These two factors—lack of mobility and lack of interaction — have made them inward-looking and also kept them far removed from the mainstream society.

Therefore, the society at large forgot about the existence of Dalits for a very long time. As a consequence, they were almost wiped out from art, literature, culture, etc. With this, the distance between Dalits and the mainstream society became much wider. This kind of chasm does not augur well for any society, much less ours which is diverse by its very nature.

Today, however, Dalits are in no mood to meekly accept this position of marginalisation and the consequent neglect by society. Thanks to the policy of positive discrimination, there is a new awakening and rejuvenation among Dalits which has instilled in them a burning desire to assert their identity in society. And they want to do it by the very same method which has denied them an identity.

Friends, if we want to know the place of a people in society, we have to turn to the art forms of which literature is the most vital component. It is the barometer of a people's significance in society. If we survey the Indian literature, we hardly find any mention of Dalits. Even though Valmiki who

*At the function to release a book, *Dalita Sahitya Tatwam*, Hyderabad (29 August 1998).

wrote *Ramayan* was said to be a Dalit, the community did not receive a fair deal in art and literature. This neglect of Dalits in literature only perpetuated their sense of alienation from important social processes.

Mercifully, this trend is changing and today we see the emergence of a distinct literary movement that is Dalit-oriented. The problems of Dalits are very specific to them which others cannot easily understand, much less project due to lack of social interaction with them. Hinduism has created many castes but only the Dalits have been banished from the social processes and forced to live on the outskirts of society in unhygienic surroundings. Therefore, they alone can give adequate expression to their woes and aspirations through the power of the written word. They have realised this in recent times. That is why, we find Dalit literature visible in book stalls and libraries.

I have one suggestion to make in this context. I would rather call it an appeal. Those engaged in the Dalit literary movement are aware that they are endeavouring to reconstruct society on new lines in which the Dalits would find a place of honour. But this exercise, noble as it is, must not be based on bitterness. Our aim is to integrate ourselves with the rest of the society. That being the case, we cannot antagonise those segments with which we seek to integrate ourselves. Recrimination is not for us. We must endeavour for reconciliation.

If we look at history, it is at once clear that lasting social movements are not revolutionary, based on aggressiveness and avenge, but evolutionary, based on understanding and empathy. This truth must not be ignored by Dalit writers. Jashuva followed this method and became a highly respected poet in the literary world.

Sikhamani has carved out a niche for himself as a poet. With this volume, he has entered the area of literary critique. And this volume throws new light on many aspects of Dalit literature. I am sure the readers would find it interesting and I wish Sikhamani success in all his future literary endeavours.

Thank you.

NATURAL CALAMITIES — NEED FOR A STRATEGY*

May I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt condolences to all those who have suffered heavily as a result of the cyclone which has hit Gujarat recently. I am sure all of you will join me to express our shock over a tragedy which has resulted in widespread devastation, causing misery to lakhs of people.

The entire Coromandel coastal belt of India is prone to cyclones and the State of Andhra Pradesh is all the more vulnerable. The Konaseema region of Godavari has borne the brunt of cyclonic depressions because of its proximity to the Coast. As one belonging to this soil, I have seen since my childhood how our area has been periodically subjected to the fury of nature causing a great deal of misery to the people.

The havoc wrought by cyclonic storms and the consequent floods affect the weaker sections badly as it is these sections which do not have proper housing facilities, living as they do in mud huts or ill-constructed houses which collapse in the first instance. We notice that in natural calamities like cyclones, it is the poor who account for the highest number of casualties. The reason is not far to seek. Houses collapse on the inmates bringing instant death. This has been the curse of Konaseema which is beautiful in scenery and rich in resources. Our land is rich in coconut cultivation and the dry coconut leaves are used for covering the roof. That kind of a roof offers shelter when it shines and not when it rains and much less when there is a cyclone which comes with high velocity winds.

Friends, it is, therefore, very thoughtful and kind of the Ramakrishna Mission authorities to have undertaken the great task of providing shelter to the poor and the hapless. The construction of shelters is a welcome step which needs to be appreciated whole-heartedly. It speaks volumes about the humanitarian activities being taken up by the Ramakrishna Mission.

*At the inauguration of a cyclone shelter-cum-school constructed by the Ramakrishna Mission, Mummidivaram, East Godavari Dist. (21 June 1998).

The actual users must take up the responsibility for the proper upkeep of this facility.

I am happy to note that in 1996 also the Ramakrishna Mission played a significant role in providing quick relief and rehabilitating the cyclone-affected people in Amalapuram. Their commitment to the cyclone-affected people can be seen from the fact that they constructed a bridge at Pallavaripalem and rendered help in many other ways — something which even the government officials could not do.

Needless to say, we cannot but compliment the laudable endeavours of the Ramakrishna Mission. As a matter of fact, these endeavours bear an eloquent testimony to the sensitivity, compassion and humanism of the Ramakrishna Mission. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh for earmarking Rs. 2.50 crore to rehabilitate the cyclone-affected people.

On this occasion, I call upon welfare organisations to take a leaf from the Ramakrishna Mission and undertake such projects in other vulnerable places of Konaseema. The hardships of the weaker sections must receive special attention as it is they who fall prey to nature's fury in the first instance, be it rain or shine, cyclone or sun-stroke, floods or drought. Needless to say, we all must sensitise ourselves to the problems of those affected by cyclones and other natural calamities.

While community shelters are greatly useful during times of crises, our real aim must be to have pucca houses for all. In a larger perspective, a State like Andhra Pradesh with its long coastline and high vulnerability to cyclones should think of long term plans for disaster mitigation and relief management. The strategy of development in the coastal districts needs to be restructured. Keeping in view their cyclone-proneness, an innovative and viable insurance scheme must be formulated, so that at least a significant part of the funding of the restoration and rehabilitation processes is taken care of by the system.

It goes without saying that there is an imperative need to formulate long-term strategies to deal with various natural calamities like cyclones. The Prime Minister's Relief Fund and the Calamity Relief Fund need to be further strengthened, so that bureaucratic delays do not affect expeditious relief and rehabilitation of the victims. The cyclone shelters should be properly maintained, so that they can be used for other purposes also. The importance of strengthening communication network can hardly be over-stressed. It is the only way through which the Meteorological Department can forewarn the people about impending calamities. The Government can also think in

terms of crop insurance, so that the small and marginal farmers can be helped. It can also evolve measures for providing insurance coverage for fishermen who venture out into the rough seas. Equally important is the need to ensure that the district administration is geared up so that disaster management is effectively implemented.

We cannot ignore the fact that no major disaster can be managed without assistance from the State Government, the Centre and voluntary organisations, including international humanitarian aid agencies. Even with the best of help provided, the relief operation will be far from satisfactory if the administration is not quick and efficient.

Thank you.

INDIA AND NON-RESIDENT INDIANS — THE UMBILICAL CORD*

It gives me immense pleasure to be amidst the Telugu brothers and sisters in this beautiful city of Sydney. Andhras all over the world have expressed their joy and happiness that a fellow Telugu has been elected to the high position of Speaker, Lok Sabha. I am grateful to all of them, including you who have gathered here today to spend sometime with me. I feel completely at home amidst you, even though I am so far away from home. The warmth of your affection is touching indeed.

Friends, you have come far away from your homes in search of better opportunities and greener pastures. With diligence and determination, hard work and honesty and intelligence and integrity, you have fully utilised the opportunities and achieved tremendous success in various fields. Back home, we are indeed proud of the progress and prosperity, name and fame, Indians have achieved abroad, especially the Telugus.

You are also well aware of the obligations that migrant people have towards their Motherland. You have to perform the function of cultural ambassadors and build bridges of understanding and goodwill between the country of your origin and the country of domicile. This you have to do even while operating in a new milieu, adjusting with new environs and integrating with new cultures. It is not an easy task because on the one hand you have to cultivate the social moorings of your adopted land, and achieve success in your endeavours without losing your own native bearings on the other— a complex task indeed!

In this context, it is the children who will have to be handled with care. They live in one culture at home and an altogether different culture outside. But I am happy to note that Telugus have done well in the context of preserving their distinct cultural identity even while achieving success in

*At the Dinner hosted in his honour by the Telugu Association of Sydney, Australia (October 1998).

their chosen fields. Your association is a shining example of this achievement. It is a matter of immense satisfaction that you have been able to preserve our culture because it is culture that gives an identity to us as a community and a meaning to our lives as individuals. While preserving the cultural identity is admirable, your obligation to your Motherland should not end with that. Those have done well and become wealthy must think of doing something concrete for your *Matrubhoomi*.

I am sure you are aware of the *Janmabhoomi* programme undertaken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. It has given a new orientation to the task of governance and offers a very good opportunity to expatriate Telugus to participate in the developmental processes of the land of their birth.

Therefore, I call upon the Australian Andhras to think of India, Andhra Pradesh in particular, and help in the amelioration of people's living conditions by participating in the *Janmabhoomi* programme and other public welfare activities.

With these words, I thank the Telugu Association of Sydney for the warm affection and hospitality extended to me. I wish you all the very best in your endeavours. We look forward to hear stories of your success.

The aroma of Andhra *Vantakalu* is overpowering us. So let us have our dinner.

Thank you.

NON-RESIDENT INDIANS — CULTURAL AMBASSADORS*

I greatly appreciate the gesture of the Wellington Indian Association Inc. for having invited me and members of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation who are here to attend the 44th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

Mankind, down the ages, has migrated in search of livelihood. Migration is adventurous and migration is also glamorous. I believe, that is how you are here in this nation of Sylvan Islands.

Friends, few countries would be as dissimilar as India and New Zealand are. Yet, we have been here only for a few days and feel so much at home. Perhaps it is due to our shared commitment to democracy and its lofty values, our shared concern for human rights and human dignity, our passion for cricket and hockey.

India is a large and diverse country. We speak different languages, follow different customs and profess different faiths. We cherish this rich diversity as the source of our national unity. The people of New Zealand also believe that diversity makes the world a more exciting place to live in. Respect and regard for each other's dignity is as crucial for good relations between individuals as between nations. Mutual respect does not rest upon identicalness or even similarity. It is consistent with diversity, provided there is a desire to understand and to know the other.

New Zealand, traditionally one of the most regulated and protected nations, has more than doubled its sustainable rate of economic growth through a dynamic programme of structural reforms. From protectionism to a competitive open market system, the economic transformation of New Zealand has been impressive by any reckoning. As you all know, we in India have also embarked upon far reaching economic reforms and liberalisation. We have taken bold steps to open our economy to the outside world. Many

*At the function organised by the Wellington Indian Association Inc., Wellington, New Zealand (20 October 1998).

tariffs have been reduced, the import licensing system is liberalised and foreign investment is encouraged. Ever since the economic reforms were undertaken, successive governments, irrespective of their political beliefs and ideologies, have not only followed the reforms, but also imparted fresh impetus to the process. Political parties, notwithstanding their ideological differences, are unanimous that economic reforms are irreversible and that these should be pursued further. Through new schemes and liberalised policies, the Government plans to consolidate the gains made so far.

Before I conclude, I hope and trust that the New Zealand investors will take note of these far-reaching reforms taking place in India. India holds out immense opportunities for international trade and investment. Non-Resident Indians like you are in a specially advantageous position for availing of these opportunities. It is high time that the NRIs stood for India and lent their whole-hearted support to their country of origin. Our objectives can be achieved only when all of us, whether we live in India or outside, reaffirm our commitment to the cause of the nation.

In an era in which people-to-people contact has assumed greater importance in promoting bilateral relations among countries, I am sure the Wellington Indian Association Inc. will continue to play a meaningful role in strengthening the relations between India and New Zealand.

I thank you again for your kind and generous hospitality.

AKKINENI — THE THESPIAN OF TELUGU CINEMA*

I am glad to be here amidst you at the Platinum Jubilee Birthday Celebration of *Natasamrat* Dr. Akkineni Nageswara Rao. I congratulate Dr. Akkineni Nageswara Rao. Let me also congratulate the *Rasamay* for organising the function on a grand scale befitting the glory of a unique artiste of the silver screen. In fact, in the two and a half decades of its existence, the *Rasamay* has won a good name for the promotion of cultural values amongst the lovers of art and literature.

Today's celebration is a great event for all admirers of Dr. Akkineni, the legendary hero of Telugu cinema and one of the most beloved thespians of the silver screen who dedicated his life to the art of acting. He stepped into the world of theatre at a tender age of 10 to reach amazing heights on the silver screen and remain an ever-green hero for over five decades. The variety of roles that he played in social, devotional, mythological, folk and action-oriented films won him encomiums from millions of film fans. In fact, there is hardly any role he did not play. He is widely known in the film world as the 'Architect of Telugu Screen's Golden Age'. The nation acknowledged his valuable contributions to the field of art and culture by bestowing on him numerous awards and honours like *Padmashri* and *Padmabhushan*. Dr. Akkineni is the first artiste from the South to have been honoured with the coveted Dada Saheb Phalke Award of 1991 for his outstanding services to the field of cinema.

This highly honoured celebrity is a multifaceted personality—a film actor, producer, studio builder, champion of education, cultural ambassador, prolific writer, philanthropist and a social activist. He is indeed an institution by himself. Great actions always speak of a great mind. What Dr. Akkineni Nageswara Rao has achieved through sheer dint of hard work, discipline and devotion, in a short span, is something many cannot achieve in more

*At the Platinum Jubilee Birthday Celebration of Dr. Akkineni Nageswara Rao, Hyderabad (20 September 1998).

than one lifetime. His life and achievements prove beyond doubt that the greatness in man does not depend on his circumstances, but on what one makes of one's life.

Friends, today, cinema represents the creative work of our people in the most modern of all our arts. On this special occasion, all those connected with this industry must realize the immense significance of this powerful medium and the great responsibility it has towards society. Films do have a higher social purpose as they help in spreading awareness among the masses. Dr. Akkineni Nageswara Rao not only acted in value-based social films but also produced message-oriented movies. Today, in our mighty task of nation-building, with increasing emphasis on progress with social justice, the projection of the changing face of our society through this powerful medium will definitely help in ushering in the economic and social transformation that we are seeking to bring about.

The Platinum Jubilee Birthday Celebration of this great artiste, Dr. Akkineni Nageswara Rao, will surely add to the proud moments of every artiste for the great honour he has done to the whole community. I am happy to learn that on this occasion, the *Rasamay* will greet this great artiste of our times by releasing a book titled *Dr. Akkineni—Memorable Roles* which carries in-depth reviews by eminent film critics, renowned scholars and other learned men.

On this happy occasion, may I once again extend my heartiest greetings to Dr. Akkineni Nageswara Rao and wish him many more years of creative excellence.

Thank you.

RAMA SARMA — AN EMINENT JOURNALIST*

I am extremely happy to be associated with this function organised by the Vamsee Art Theatres International for presenting the "Mutnuri Krishna Rao Gold Medal" to the eminent journalist, Shri K.V.S. Rama Sarma.

Friends, the values and principles that we cherished during our freedom struggle have given the Press in India a rich legacy, and sense of duty. This legacy has been sustained in our country through conscious and concerted efforts by all concerned — political leadership, mass media and the people at large. The need for a vibrant and vigilant Press for the survival of democracy casts a great responsibility on those who run the newspapers, particularly the editors and the management. In reporting events, objectivity and accuracy are the cardinal factors which must guide the journalist. Journalism is indeed an art. Like all forms of art, it is creative and communicative. Its end should be not merely to satisfy the anxiety of the readers about the latest happenings but also to educate them on matters of importance by presenting to them objective material, so that they are enlightened about the state of the nation. Needless to say, a newspaper's domain embraces all forms through which news and comments on them reach the public. In such a scenario, the editor finds his job very challenging and onerous at once.

Friends, newspapers play an important role in social transformation, especially in developing countries like ours. Besides providing information to its readers, a newspaper aims to give a proper perspective even while enabling a forum for debate on vital issues of the times. To uphold the moral and ethical values in society, it is important for the newspapers to act with responsibility by being fair and independent, neutral and objective.

Of late, the growing pace of the electronic media and the intense competition in the print media have made the publishing of a newspaper an

*At the Presentation Function of 'Mutnuri Krishna Rao Gold Medal' to Shri K.V.S. Rama Sarma, former Editor-in-Chief, *National Herald* and Editor, *Congress Samachar*, Hyderabad (7 March 1999).

uphill task, particularly for the editors and the proprietors. It requires entrepreneurs with ample drive, ambition and foresight to break the traditional barriers and overcome social inertia by transforming the theory of journalism into real practice.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that our Press has been built by men of courage and high ideals, who sought truth and made no alliance with the authority. It is also not a coincidence that some of the great figures in the history of Indian Press were those who moulded and led the freedom movement and shaped the new India. In the days of our freedom struggle, the Press was vital instrument in our fight for liberation. Today, it must continue the unfinished battle of the larger cause of freedom for all by fighting the forces of sectarianism, provincialism, fanaticism and superstition. These are issues which need to be given greater attention by the media.

Our friend Rama Sarmaji has distinguished himself as a fearless journalist, respected by his peers and listened to with admiration by others. His creative thinking, farsightedness and vision have added a new dimension to newspaper management and philosophy.

One of the most widely read columnists, Sarmaji was the first Asian to top the list in the Diploma in Journalism from the prestigious International Institute of Journalism, Berlin. And then began a career in the media which earned him name and fame throughout the country. During his four decades of journalistic career, Sarmaji has all along been entrusted with important assignments for covering major events — national as well as international. He had been the Editor-in-Chief of one of the country's prestigious newspapers, the *National Herald* which was started by none other than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He is currently serving as the editor of the *Congress Samachar* brought out from Delhi. Gifted with a flair for writing, he has authored a book and delivered a number of lectures in various Seminars and Conferences which have earned him encomiums from far and wide.

Before I conclude, I would like to congratulate the Vamsee Art Theatres International, one of the pioneers in the promotion of excellence in cultural and social spheres, for instituting this prestigious award for the vigilant guardians of our media in honour of late Shri Mutnuri Krishna Rao. To my mind, there cannot be better tribute than this to Mutnuri, himself a journalist of such high stature who played a pioneering role in the field of language journalism not only in Andhra Pradesh but also in the whole of India. As the editor of *Krishna Patrika*, which was launched during the freedom struggle, he played a crucial role in mobilising the masses to join the movement, in highlighting the problems faced by the people and in catering to the

information needs of the public. The organisers of this function deserve all compliments for bestowing this year's Gold Medal to Shri Rama Sarma who has done his profession proud and who is in every way worthy of being conferred this honour.

May I take this opportunity to wish the very best to Shri Rama Sarma in the years ahead, and also the Vamsee Art Theatres International in all their endeavours.

Thank you.

I am happy to be here amidst you at the launching pad of this satirical magazine, *Kingmaker Joker*, a Telugu fortnightly edited by our good friend Satish Chandar. There is a great vacuum for this kind of publication in our language and therefore it comes not a day too soon. The magazines we have are concerned about politics all too seriously, leaving little scope for viewing things in a lighter vein at the drama of passing events. We have cartoons as the only source of satire. But, cartoons are mostly based on individuals and have limited scope for expression on issues. We need issue based humour which can only come through analytical writing in satirical language.

Satirical writings on political matters will have a salutary effect of keeping the politicians conscious of their utterances. Such writings would also keep the people entertained as well as educated on the intricacies of policy statements and political perspective, public issues and political ideology. Now we are in the habit of analysing everything all too seriously, knowing fully well that such analysis may not necessarily take us to a higher level of existence. When we realise this, we get agitated and angry.

To laugh at something is better than to get angry with it and consequently taking to the roads, in the process smashing whatever comes in one's way—right from RTC buses down to ambulance vans carrying emergency patients. If only we can cultivate the ability to laugh, we can probably take things in our stride and be at peace with ourselves. We Indians are quite a serious minded people. We need to tame this seriousness of our nature and sensitise people to see things occasionally from a jocular angle also and have a hearty laugh which is good for health. In this, politics is an important element. When politics determines our fate to a large extent, we are naturally concerned with politics and politicians in a big way. People run after the politician as he wields power and is in a position to dole out favours. The popularity of

*At the function to launch *Kingmaker Joker*, a Telugu satirical magazine, Hyderabad (1 April 1999).

a politician depends on the size of the crowd which surrounds him. Naturally he does not want to lose the company of visitors. Instead, he seeks to attract more and more people to his court. This involves making promises which he knows he cannot often fulfil. There is a joke that if you approach a politician to send your son into the outer space on a satellite, he will ask you for the details of the boy, without batting an eyelid and promise to talk to the Minister on his next visit to Hyderabad! You know, it is very difficult to say 'No'. If you say 'no', then people will not come to you. The quip of Marie-Antoinette suggesting to eat cake when people complained of shortage of bread remains the classic joke of all times. It exemplifies the lack of sensitivity of some of those in positions of power towards those who are at the receiving end of the exercise of such power.

Making promises is a cakewalk for the politician while getting them fulfilled is a firewalk to the people! Even if somebody tries to fulfil his promises, others will not let him, lest they should also fulfil theirs. They are afraid that there may not be anything to promise about after a while, if they keep fulfilling their promises in right earnest! The people tend to take these promises quite seriously in their innocence and that is how the trouble arises. We do not think critically whether these promises can be fulfilled or not. We just believe because we live with such problems that if somebody comes to offer us help, to view it critically is far from our minds. The politician also gets away because there is nobody around who can question his utterances, much less make fun of his promise-making spree. If only the politician knows that the media can make a mincemeat of what he says, he will think twice before saying anything.

In the West, there are quite a few satirical publications like the *Punch* and TV programmes like "Yes Minister" which have become highly successful and popular. Of course, they are gifted with a sense of humour. They enjoy humour even at their own expense. In India, on the contrary, we all enjoy humour only so long as it is not directed at us! It is said that sense of humour is what makes you laugh at somebody which will drive you mad if it happens to you! This is typical of the Indian sense of humour and satire.

It is a gift to bear with satire. And to be meaningful, satire should not be too personalised. It should address institutions and issues in the true framework of humour. Healthy humour should elicit laughter from all around, the best medicine to keep the heart free from tension and the mind free from malice. If *Kingmaker Joker* can do this, it is worth the effort. However, I must hasten to emphasise that satire should not breed cynicism or show vital institutions of the polity in a poor light, lest people should lose their faith in the system. Humour should not desensitise our conscience to react strongly

when the situation demands. It should liberate us from gullibility. If satire can make the politician realise that he can be laughed at, it would have served its purpose. He will behave with maturity and responsibility. Here I must add that satire must target the society also—pointing out the evils that society sustains without any qualms. People cannot get off the hook for their gullibility.

This kind of publication is a new venture and there is nothing to guide the management in this enterprise. How you tread your path is entirely upto you. But a great deal of the success of your venture depends on how you tread your path and what impression you leave on the minds of the readers. But as they say, a well begun thing is half completed. Already you are beginning well by launching it on the All Fools Day—an ideal day for satire. If you observe the restriction imposed by law and parliamentary privileges and make serious efforts to give refined and decent satire, I am sure that your magazine will soon establish itself in the market as also in the people's mind like Cho Ramaswamy's *Tuglak* in Tamil.

I wish you all the best.

Thank you.

PART III

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

It is the right as indeed the duty of the Speaker, Lok Sabha, to interpret the relevant provisions of the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha so far as matters in, or relating to, the House are concerned. No one, including the Government, can enter into any argument or controversy with the Speaker over such interpretations.

The rulings and observations made by the Speaker constitute precedents by which subsequent Presiding Officers, members and officers are guided. Such precedents are formulated as rules of procedure or followed as conventions. The Speaker's rulings cannot be questioned except on a substantive motion. The Speaker is not bound to give reasons for his decisions.

Some of the important rulings and observations made by Shri G.M.C. Balayogi as the Speaker, Twelfth Lok Sabha, are chronicled in this Chapter.

Conduct of Members in the House

Context: On 31 March 1998, while the Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, Shri Som Pal was making a statement regarding the situation arising out of the thunder-squall in Orissa and West Bengal, Shri Sunil Khan, a member, and some other members came and stood in the well of the House. Shri Sunil Khan also advanced towards the Minister. Thereupon, the Speaker observed¹ :—

Observation: "...This is with regard to the conduct of one of the hon'ble members of the House. It is very bad on the part of the member to have done so. The hon'ble member should behave well in the House. It was very bad on his part going to the hon'ble Ministers and to the Treasury Benches' side. It is not good on the part of the member to do so. I am going to name Shri Sunil Khan."

Thereupon, Shri Sunil Khan expressed regret for the incident and the matter was closed.

¹L.S. Deb., 31 March 1998

Maintaining Objectivity in Speeches

Context: On 1 June 1998, before discussion under Rule 193 regarding 'incidents of suicide committed by farmers in various parts of the country due to non-payment of remunerative prices for their agricultural produce' was taken up, the Speaker, dwelling upon the fate of poor farmers, observed² :—

Observation: "I would urge the hon'ble members to rise above party lines and maintain objectivity in their speeches. Apportioning blame is not going to help; constructive suggestions have to be made to overcome the problems that beset the agricultural sector. I would also urge the Government to make some meaningful, positive response by announcing concrete and comprehensive steps which it intends to take in this regard to ensure that such tragic incidents do not recur, to ameliorate the plight of the farmers".

Zero Hour

Context: On 1 June 1998, after the Question Hour, when members were raising matters of urgent public importance, a member, Shri Th. Chaoba Singh began to read out from a paper. The Speaker, thereupon, observed³ :—

Observation: "You should not read, but you can make your points. During Zero Hour, you should not read from any paper."

Collective Responsibility of the Council of Ministers

Context: On 9 July 1998, after the Question Hour, the Leader of Opposition, Shri Sharad Pawar raised the issue regarding the reported remark of the Minister of Urban Affairs and Employment, Shri Ram Jethmalani on the need to review reservations for SCs/STs and OBCs. Some other members also made submissions on the issue. Thereupon, the Speaker observed⁴ :—

Observation: "Hon'ble members, every observation or action or demeanour of any Cabinet Minister has implications over the collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers. So, I request the Hon'ble Prime Minister to give a brief clarification regarding the Government's position on the issue raised by the Hon'ble Leader of Opposition and others ..."

²L.S. Deb., 1 June 1998

³L.S. Deb., 1 June 1998

⁴L.S. Deb., 9 July 1998

Thereafter, the Minister of Urban Affairs and Employment, Shri Ram Jethmalani and the Prime Minister clarified the stand of the Government on the issue.

Use of the word 'Harijan'

Context: On 9 July 1998, after the Question Hour, when members were making submissions on the reported remark of the Minister of Urban Affairs and Employment, Shri Ram Jethmalani on the need to review reservations for SCs/STs and OBCs, Shri Arif Md. Khan, a member, pointed out that some members had used the word 'Harijan' which was sanctimonious and patronising and, therefore, this word should not be used. The Speaker observed⁵ :—

Observation: "I would like to make a small clarification to the hon'ble members. The word 'Harijan' may not be used. Instead, they may be referred to as SC/ST."

Unruly scenes in the House

Context: On 13 July 1998, the House witnessed unparliamentary and disorderly scenes which compelled the Speaker to make the following observation⁶ on 14 July 1998:—

Observation: "As the members are aware, yesterday, that is, 13 July 1998, the House was witness to highly unparliamentary and disorderly scenes in the evening which compelled me to adjourn the House for the day. As the hon'ble members would recall, when the House met after a series of adjournments at 17.30 hrs., several hon'ble members rushed to the well of the House menacingly and crowded around my Chair and started raising slogans. A member, Shri Surendra Prasad Yadav went to the extent of snatching papers from my desk. To facilitate transaction of the listed business, I called Shri M. Thambi Durai, the Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs to introduce the Constitution (Eighty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 1998 which was listed at item No. 10 in yesterday's List of Business for introduction. As the Minister was seeking the leave of the House, the same member, Shri Surendra Prasad Yadav aided by another member Prof. Ajit Kumar Mehta, forcibly snatched papers from the Minister and prevented him from introducing the Bill. Thereafter, there was complete pandemonium in the House. Under these circumstances, I was left with no other option but to adjourn the House for the day and leave the Chamber in anguish.

⁵L.S. Deb., 9 July 1998

⁶L.S. Deb., 14 July 1998

I am constrained to observe that such unruly scenes, particularly the disorderly conduct of the members, amounts to bringing the House into contempt and is highly reprehensible. If the elected representatives of the people behave and conduct themselves in such a fashion, the very credibility of this democratic institution will stand eroded.

I deprecate the conduct of Shri Surendra Prasad Yadav and Prof. Ajit Kumar Mehta in the strongest possible terms. I also urge the Leaders of all the Parliamentary Parties in Lok Sabha to ensure that their members conduct themselves in the House in the manner befitting their status."

Parliamentary Etiquette

Context: On 31 July 1998, while condemning the unparliamentary behaviour of some members after Question Hour on that day, the Speaker observed⁷ :—

Observation: "I feel that while each one of us in his individual capacity is responsible to abide by the rules and to uphold and enhance the dignity of the House, a slightly more onerous duty is cast on the Leaders, Chief Whips and Whips of Parties and Groups to keep their members in check. While some new members may not be aware of parliamentary etiquette and decorum, their Leaders, whether they be in the Opposition or in the Treasury Benches, should educate them properly so that they inculcate the parliamentary values of decency and good behaviour.

But when Leaders themselves indulge in unparliamentary behaviour, including use of abusive language, I am at a loss to find words strong enough to condemn such behaviour.

Members may recall that during the Special Session of Lok Sabha to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, the House had unanimously adopted a Resolution, resolving *inter alia* to preserve and enhance the prestige of Parliament by maintaining the inviolability of the Question Hour, refraining from transgressing into official areas of the House and from shouting slogans, etc. in the House. Unfortunately, this Resolution is not being followed— neither in letter nor in spirit. The result is that the House, and the entire nation for that matter, is witness to unruly scenes in the House almost every day. Rushing to the well of the House on slightest provocation, staging a *dharna* in the well of the House, shouting slogans, having a running argument with the Chair and not heeding to the directions from the Chair are acts of grave indiscipline which I strongly deprecate.

⁷L.S. Deb., 31 July 1998

I would request all sections of this House kindly to ponder over the deteriorating standards of functioning in this House and search their souls to find a solution to this problem so that all of us may strive together to enhance the prestige of this House, without the Chair being driven to take drastic measures."

Decorum in the House

Context: On 14 December 1998, when the Lok Sabha re-assembled after adjournment due to interruptions regarding introduction of the Constitution (Eighty-fourth) Amendment Bill, 1998, the Speaker made the following observations⁸ :-

Observation: "Hon'ble members, it may be recalled that on 11 December 1998, when the House proceedings commenced, an acrimonious situation arose in the context of the *bandh* that had been launched by certain political parties to demonstrate against the economic policies of the Government and in the context of the Women's Reservation Bill.

Several hon'ble members of the House committed transgression into the official area, that is, the well of the House, and also menacingly pushed forward towards the Speaker's Chair, shouting slogans. In the process, seemingly physical assaults amongst the members also occurred.

This behaviour of the members is not merely a violation of the established Rules of Procedure of the House, but is also a serious breach of the solemn pledge made by this entire House during its special Golden Jubilee Session, not to speak of the criminality of the seeming assaults.

The incident has been, *prima facie*, in the nature of a gross violation of the privilege of the House in that it has seriously detracted from the dignity of the House. Pursuant to the incident, certain privilege notices have also been received from some members.

Incidents of this sort strike at the root of the very credibility of this House and its survival and, therefore, are dangerous for our democratic polity.

In the circumstances, I strongly condemn the incident of 11 December 1998 and the behaviour of the participants in the incident.

I shall also refer the privilege notices to the Committee of Privileges with the direction to give a time-bound report."

⁸L.S. Deb., 14 December 1998

Use of President's name to influence the Debate

Context: On 26 February 1999, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Shri P.R. Kumaramangalam submitted that some members, while speaking on the Statutory Resolution seeking approval of President's Rule in Bihar, had inadvertently used the President of India's name to influence the debate. He requested the Chair to look into the debate and remove those portions which might amount to transgression of the relevant Rule [Rule 352(vi)]. Thereupon, the Speaker observed⁹ :—

Observation: "Rule 352(vi) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha regarding the rules to be observed by the members while speaking is clear and categorical."

"352. A member while speaking shall not —

(vi) Use President's name for the purpose of influencing the Debate."

Therefore, the proceedings relating to the Resolution for approval of the imposition of President's Rule in Bihar and discussion thereon will be scrutinised thoroughly and those parts of the proceedings which are violative of Rule 352(vi) will be removed therefrom and shall not form part of the same".

Voting in the House by a member who had become the Chief Minister of a State

Context: On 17 April 1999 before the Motion of Confidence in the Council of Ministers was put to the vote of the House, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Shri P.R. Kumaramangalam submitted that as per convention, Shri Giridhar Gamang, a member, who had since become the Chief Minister of Orissa, should not be allowed to cast his vote. The Leader of Opposition, Shri Sharad Pawar and some other members of Opposition submitted that since Shri Giridhar Gamang continued to be member of the House, he was entitled to cast his vote on the Motion of Confidence in the Council of Ministers. Thereupon, the Speaker observed¹⁰ :—

Observation: "With regard to the Notice received from the Hon'ble Parliamentary Affairs Minister on Shri Giridhar Gamang's attendance in the House, hon'ble members, as per provision of Article 101(4) of the Constitution, if a member of Lok Sabha is, without permission of the House, absent from

⁹L.S. Deb., 26 February 1999

¹⁰L.S. Deb., 17 April 1999

all meetings of the Lok Sabha for a period of sixty days, the House may declare his seat vacant.

There are instances where members, on their appointment as Ministers in the States, have signed the Attendance Register of Lok Sabha to avoid loss of seats for non-attendance in the House.

However, in a few instances, it had been observed from the Chair that while such Ministers continued to be members, it would not be desirable for them to participate in the deliberations of the House. Accordingly, such members withdrew from the House forthwith.

Shri Giridhar Gamang who is the Chief Minister of Orissa continues to be a member of Lok Sabha. He has come to cast his vote on the Confidence Motion. In view of the aforesaid, I leave it to the good sense of the member as regards the question of casting his vote on the Confidence Motion."

The member (Shri Gamang) voted against the Motion.

PART IV
TENTH LOK SABHA EXPERIENCE

CONSTITUENCY RELATED MATTERS AND OTHER TOPICAL ISSUES

Parliamentary practices, procedures and conventions are designed to ensure orderly and expeditious transaction of business. They are also devised to impart an element of stability and predictability in the course of proceedings within the House. To attain these objectives, all sections of the House are provided with reasonable opportunities through parliamentary devices to express their views on matters of public importance and to elicit the views of the Government on various issues. Some such parliamentary devices which have been incorporated in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha are: Questions, Resolutions, Motions, Calling Attention, Short Duration Discussions, Matters under Rule 377, etc. Members also take part in discussions on various subjects that come up before the House from time to time.

Insofar as Questions are concerned, these are one of the most important and effective parliamentary devices through which matters of public importance are raised on the floor of the House and the accountability of the executive ensured. The first hour of every sitting of the House is normally devoted to Questions. Questions are essentially of three types: Starred Questions, Unstarred Questions and Short Notice Questions. A Starred Question is one to which a member desires an oral answer in the House. The answer to such a Question may be followed by Supplementary Questions, germane to the main one and arising out of the reply given by the Minister. In the case of Unstarred Questions and such Questions that have not reached for oral answer, the written answers are laid on the Table by the concerned Minister. A Short Notice Question is one which relates to a matter of urgent public importance and may be asked with a notice shorter than the normal period prescribed for a Question.

One of the important Indian procedural innovations is that of raising matters under Rule 377 in the Lok Sabha. According to this device, a member who wishes to bring to the notice of the House any matter which is not a point of order, can do so if he has given a notice thereof in writing to the Secretary-General and the Speaker has permitted him to raise such a matter in the House.

Any member desirous of raising a Short Duration Discussion on a matter of urgent public importance may give notice in writing to the Secretary-General specifying clearly and precisely the matter to be so raised under Rule 193 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.

Members make use of various parliamentary devices to raise matters of public importance and constituency related issues and want immediate attention of the House and the Government. As a member of the Tenth Lok Sabha, Shri G.M.C. Balayogi made use of various parliamentary devices to highlight problems faced by his constituency and constituents and sought redressal of these grievances; he also participated in discussions on various topical issues, thus fulfilling effectively his role as a people's representative.

The texts of Questions (Starred and Unstarred) asked by Shri Balayogi along with answers given by the Minister concerned, matters raised by him under Rule 377 as well as the discussions in which he took part during the tenure of the Tenth Lok Sabha are reproduced here.

QUESTIONS

During the Tenth Lok Sabha, Shri Balayogi actively participated in the debates and among other things highlighted the problems of his constituency. He raised four Starred Questions and thirty-six Unstarred Questions pertaining to topics of general interest and constituency related matters. The text of two Starred Questions related to Andhra Pradesh and nine Unstarred Questions related to his constituency along with answers by the concerned Ministers are reproduced here.

While participating in the proceedings during the Question Hour, Shri Balayogi raised seven supplementaries to seek clarifications on constituency related matters. The texts of four of the seven supplementaries which have a bearing on his constituency are also reproduced here.

Twenty-seven Unstarred questions of a general nature covering a wide range of topics were also raised by Shri Balayogi. Topics of varied nature like: Pollution, Population Control, Repair of Railway Bridges, Power Projects, Village Health Guide Scheme, Train Accidents, Drinking Water Facilities in Villages, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Bonded Labour, Welfare of SCs/STs, Inland Water Transport, Flood Control, Stadiums in Rural Areas, etc. formed the thrust of his Unstarred questions to seek written replies from the Ministry concerned.

STARRED QUESTIONS

Power Projects in Andhra Pradesh¹

*369. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI: Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposals have been received from Andhra Pradesh for setting up of power plants in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which these projects are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI KALP NATH RAI): (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b). Proposals for the following 4 power projects of Andhra Pradesh are being examined in the Central Electricity Authority for techno-economic clearance:—

S.No.	Name of the Project	Capacity
1.	Rayalaseema Thermal Power Station Extn. Stage-II	2x210 MW
2.	Manuguru Super Thermal Power Station	2x500 MW
3.	Nagarjuna Sagar Tail Pool Dam	50 MW
4.	Lower Jurala	147.6 MW

(c). The techno-economic clearance and investment approval depends upon several factors, including the comprehensiveness of the project report received from the project authorities, time taken by the project authorities in replying to various comments/observations by the Central Electricity Authority and/or the Central Water Commission, availability of various inputs and clearances such as fuel availability, transportation of coal, gas, port

¹L.S. Deb., 3 August 1992

*This Question was listed in the name of one more member

facilities, water availability, clearance from environment and forest angles, constraints of funds, etc.

SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI: Sir, the hon'ble Minister's reply is not clear. The Minister has stated in his reply that these projects are being examined.

Sir, almost the entire Andhra Pradesh is facing power crisis. Still, today, there is six to nine hours power cut in the State. Due to this power cut, a number of industries and also the agriculturists are facing a lot of problems. As per the Andhra Pradesh Government's report, there are twelve projects submitted to the Government. They are: Visakhapatnam Thermal Power Project; Vijeswaram 300 MW; Kakinada 300 MW; Amalapuram 375MW; Jegurupadu 400 MW; Jegurupadu Phase II 100MW; Rajahmundry Vemagiri 300MW; Nuclear Power Station at Nagarjuna Sagar; Rayalaseema Thermal Power Station 400MW; Krishnapatnam Thermal Power Station 1,000MW; Kothagudam Thermal Power Station 400MW; Ramagundam Thermal Power Station 420MW; and 100MW Diesel Power Station at Renigunta.

I want to know from the Minister whether the Government has cleared any of these projects in Andhra Pradesh and whether they have included any project in the Eighth Plan. I want a clear answer from the hon'ble Minister.

SHRI KALP NATH RAI: There is shortage of energy and peak shortage throughout the country. Andhra Pradesh is also facing the same problem. Now, four projects have been cleared by the Central Government. And three projects are pending. In Andhra Pradesh, 4,200MW power production is in the State sector; 1,700MW is thermal and 2,500MW is hydro. Sir, a new superthermal power station at Ramagundam is also supplying power; Ramagundam is supplying 580MW power to Andhra Pradesh. Also, Andhra Pradesh is getting 145MW from Neyveli and 40MW from Kalpakkam.

Sir, now four projects have been cleared. In the private sector, Visakhapatnam 1,000MW has been cleared by the CEA and by the Planning Commission. PIB clearance has also taken place.

Now M/s. Ashok Leyland and Mission Energy are going to establish a 1,000MW power station at Visakhapatnam. Another power station in joint venture is going to come up in Andhra Pradesh which will be a joint venture between Government of Andhra Pradesh and M/s. G.V.K. Reddy Industries for a capacity of 400 MW. The third is - M/s. Spectrum Technology and N.T.P.C. are going to establish a 400 MW power station in Godavari area. Similarly, there are five projects which are pending clearance with regard to

Andhra Pradesh. They are: (i) Rayalaseema Thermal Power Station Extension Stage-II- 420MW; (ii) Manuguru Super Thermal Power Station - 1,000MW; (iii) Nagarjuna Sagar Tail Pool Dam-50MW; (iv) Lower Jurala - 147MW; and (v) Priyadarsini Jurala-221MW.

I agree with the hon'ble member that there is power shortage in Andhra Pradesh. I am very much hopeful that if all the above projects are commissioned and executed, the power problem of Andhra Pradesh, to a great extent, will be solved.

SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI: Sir, as per the drilling operations of O.N.G.C., in the coastal area of Andhra Pradesh, a lot of gas resources are available there. I want to know from the hon'ble Minister whether any foreign investors—N.R.I.s—have come forward to execute a gas-based power project in Andhra Pradesh, particularly in Godavari area where gas is available. In this connection, I want to know whether any NRI has come forward for the gas-based project in Uppada village of Kakinada for which already 600 acres of land is acquired, Rs. 5-6 crores have been spent, staff have already been posted and buildings have also been constructed. There is a doubt in the minds of the people of Kakinada that the project is being shifted to some other State. I want to know also about the mobile gas turbine set at Surasenayanam in Amalapuram. I request the hon'ble Minister to kindly clarify.

SHRI KALP NATH RAI: Sir, I have already told that the power projects in Godavari area are in joint venture. M/s. Spectrum Technology and N.T.P.C. have entered into a joint agreement for Kakinada project. 1.5M.T. of gas is available. I may assure the hon'ble member that the project is not going to be shifted and that will be executed in joint venture by N.T.P.C. and Spectrum Technology belonging to a foreign country.

Development of Ports²

*162. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether funds have been allocated for the development of major ports throughout the country during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, port-wise;

² L.S. Deb., 7 March 1993

(c) whether World Bank or Asian Development Bank has provided funds for the development of minor ports in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b). Yes, Sir. The outlays provided during the last three years for development of major ports in the country are given below:—

S.No.	Name of the Port	Outlays (Rs. in Crore)		
		1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
1	2	3	4	5
1.	(a) Calcutta	27.58	70.90	45.00
	(b) Haldia	34.87	37.00	85.58
2.	Bombay	19.08	40.00	70.43
3.	JL Nehru	45.00	65.00	57.30
4.	Madras	39.81	55.00	35.89
5.	Cochin	33.30	37.03	42.17
6.	Visakhapatnam	37.05	59.79	65.57
7.	Kandla	23.92	55.00	40.00
8.	Marmugao	5.76	7.10	11.76
9.	Paradip	9.61	39.65	67.00
10.	New Mangalore	7.17	8.56	4.91
11.	Tuticorin	6.10	8.95	17.05
Total Major Ports		289.25	483.98	541.66

(c) and (d). Yes, Sir. The Asian Development Bank has provided a loan assistance of US\$ 77.90 million for development of Kakinada Port in Andhra Pradesh. However, there is no project funded by the World Bank for Minor Ports in this State.

	Rs. in Crore	Conversion rate
Equivalent to :	120.75	Rs. 15.50 = 1US\$ (applicable at the time of entering into the loan agreement with ADB)
	244.61	Rs. 31.40 = 1US\$ (current rate)
**	**	**

My first supplementary is that there are nearly 133 minor ports in the country and particularly in Andhra Pradesh there are 8 to 9 minor ports. In order to avoid rush in the major ports, it is also the reasonable duty of the Government to improve the minor ports.

Kakinada port is called a minor port even though the export and import operations of this minor port exceed the operations of the major port. Recently, the Asian Development Bank also gave Rs. 120.75 crore for the development of Kakinada minor port.

In this connection, I would like to know from the hon'ble Minister whether this Kakinada port will remain, after utilisation of Asian Development Bank funds, only as a minor port or will it be declared a major port?

I would like to know when Kakinada will be declared as a major port.

I would also like to know whether in view of the vast coastal line area in Andhra Pradesh, the Central Government is going to develop any fishing harbour project in Andhra Pradesh.

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SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI: I Would like to know whether the Government is going to open any fishing harbour project at Kakinada and whether Kakinada port will be declared as a major port.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER: I would like to inform the hon'ble member that Kakinada port is a minor port which falls under the jurisdiction of the State. None of the minor ports come under the Central Government.

As the exports are increasing manifold and very fast, even in the existing 11 major ports in the country there will very soon be no space left for more exports to be done through them. There will be congestion.

There is a thinking but no decision has been taken that one minor port on the Eastern coast and one minor port on the Western coast can be taken over as a major port, subject to availability of funds from the Finance Ministry.

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STARRED QUESTIONS (SUPPLEMENTARIES)

Employees' State Insurance Corporation³

*44. Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some State Governments have not responded favourably to the Employees' State Insurance Corporation move to extend its schemes of medical benefits to new areas and sectors of employment;

(b) if so, whether any concrete proposals have been formulated in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA) : (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

The State Governments have generally responded favourably to extension of the ESI Scheme in new areas. However, due to financial constraints, sometimes they find it difficult to complete the arrangements for medical care, the responsibility for which vests in the State Governments. In order to overcome this difficulty, the ESI Corporation has decided to meet the total expenditure on medical care in respect of new areas for an initial period of three years.

³L.S. Deb., 13 August 1993

*Main Question was listed in the name of two other members

As regards the extension of the ESI Scheme to new sectors of employment, some State Governments have not favoured extension of the Scheme to plantation workers on the ground that the workers are already enjoying medical benefit free of cost provided by their employers under the Plantations Labour Act and plantations are scattered in interior or hilly and inaccessible areas. Hence the matter is not being pursued.

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SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Sir, Andhra Pradesh is the richest coconut producing State in the country. My constituency, Amalapuram, is exporting nearly Rs. 500 crore worth of coconuts every year. There are a number of coconut workers involved in plucking coconuts and processing coconuts. So far, neither the State Government nor the Central Government has given benefits to the coconut workers in the field. Nearly one lakh coconut workers are there in Andhra Pradesh itself and 40,000 workers are there in my constituency. I want to know from the hon'ble Minister whether Government is going to extend the ESI Scheme to coconut workers and also provide financial assistance and insurance schemes to the unorganised coconut workers.

SHRI P.A. SANGMA : I have already answered about the criteria on the basis of which this scheme can be introduced. I have State-wise figures where the areas have been identified for coverage and we have already planned the programme for 1993-94. I will pass on the details to the hon'ble member.

Powerloom Industry⁴

*345. Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of workers engaged in powerloom industry, State-wise;
- (b) the percentage of the cloth being manufactured through powerlooms out of the total cloth manufactured in the country;
- (c) the details of the financial assistance provided by the Government to encourage powerloom industry in the country during the last three years, State-wise; and

⁴ L.S. Deb., 20 August 1993

*Main Question was listed in the name of three other members

(d) the broad details of the schemes being implemented by the Government for welfare of the workers engaged in the powerloom industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI G. VENKATSWAMY): (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) Powerlooms are in the decentralised sector and State-wise figures of workers engaged are not maintained. However, it is estimated that approximately 60 lakh persons are employed in the powerloom industry.

(b) The share of the powerloom sector was about 72 per cent of the total production of cloth during 1992-93.

(c) The financial assistance by the Government of India is not allocated State-wise but scheme-wise. The financial assistance to the powerloom sector during the last three years has been as under:

Actual Expenditure

(Rs. in lakh)	
Year	Total
1990-91	56.31
1991-92	73.16
1992-93	100.18

(d) The Government has taken several measures to promote the powerloom industry like introduction of an insurance scheme for powerloom workers, strengthening of powerloom service centres, liberalising the policy for installing powerlooms in the wake of new industrial policy and giving 5 per cent export quota to this sector.

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SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are nearly 15,000 to 20,000 weavers in my constituency. They are facing a lot of problems. In case

of fire accidents, the weavers are losing everything, including their looms, houses and other things. There is another section, that is, sizing workers in the weavers' community and they are also facing a lot of problems. They have not been given any loan or any financial assistance by the Government. I want to know from the hon'ble Minister whether the Government is going to give any financial assistance in case of fire accidents to the weavers and also the sizing workers who are facing a lot of problems.

MR. SPEAKER : The question relates not only to your constituency but to all.

SHRI G. VENKATSWAMY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the State Government has given some funds to the handloom workers when the fire accident took place. In response to the representation given to me by the hon'ble member, I have asked the State Government to provide assistance immediately.

Development of Oil Fields⁵

*463. Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the particulars of bids received by the Government from inside the country and abroad for development of proven oilfields;

(b) the norms followed in evaluating the bids;

(c) whether any complaints have been made by the bidding companies in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the Government's reaction thereto; and

(e) the particulars of bids approved and the terms and conditions relating thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) In response to the offer made by the Government of India in August 1992 for development of 31 small and 12 medium-sized fields, a total of 117 bids were received. 22 foreign companies and 26 Indian companies submitted

⁵L.S. Deb., 28 April 1994

*Main Question was listed in the name of one more member

bids, either on their own or in consortium. In the offer of fields made in October 1993 for development of 8 medium and 33 small-sized fields, a total of 54 bids have been received from 11 foreign and 19 Indian companies.

(b) to (d) The bid documents, provided to all interested companies, prescribed the format and content of the bid to be given by each bidder. These include *inter alia* details of the bidding company/consortium, technical information relating to reservoir assessment, reserve estimates and work programme and the commercial terms offered.

Clarifications are sought from bidders, both before and during negotiations with them, on their proposals and the non-negotiable terms are made clear to them. These are the payment of statutory levies, the firmness of cost estimates and the previous experience of the bidder in undertaking development of fields. Bidders are also told to give their responses by a specified last date.

The technical evaluation of the proposals received after negotiations and clarifications is carried out and the commercial terms offered by all technically acceptable bidders are then evaluated.

Some companies had sought to know the reasons for their bids not being successful. Replies have been sent to them in this regard. Representations were also received from one company regarding the criteria used for evaluating the bids. The points raised by them have been examined and Government is of the view that the final decision taken is in accordance with these criteria, specified in the bidding format and during negotiations with bidders, and based on sound techno-economic considerations.

(e) Government have approved award of contracts for 13 small-sized and 4 medium-sized fields. 12 of the small-sized fields are in Gujarat while the PY-1 field is in the Cauvery offshore basin. Details of the awards for the small-sized fields are as follows:

	Name of the company/consortium	Field
1		2
1.	Gujarat State Petrochemicals Corporation Limited, (GSPCL), Ahmedabad	Hazira, Cambay Bhandut, Matar and Sabarmati
2.	Selan Exploration Technology Ltd., New Delhi	Indrora, Bakrol and Lohar

1	2
3. Larsen & Toubro, Bombay-Joshi Technologies, USA	Dholka, Wavel
4. Interlink Geofizika, Baroda	Baola
5. Hindustan Oil Exploration Company (HOEC), Baroda-Mosbacher Energy Co. USA-Petrodyne Inc., USA	PY-1
6. Hindustan Oil Exploration Company, Baroda-Gujarat State Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd., Ahmedabad,— Petrodyne Inc., USA	Asjol

Three medium-sized fields in the Western offshore—Mukta, Panna and Mid and South Tapti—have been awarded to a consortium of Enron Exploration Company of USA and Reliance Industries of India, while the Ravva field in Krishna-Godavari offshore has been awarded to a consortium of Command Petroleum, Australia Videocon International, India and Marubeni Corporation, Japan. The medium-sized fields are to be developed by the private companies in Joint Ventures with ONGC while the small-sized fields would be developed by private companies on their own, without participation by ONGC. These fields are to be developed under production sharing arrangements, with statutory levies like royalty and cess being payable.

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SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI: The entire K.G. Project and the drilling operations of ONGC are situated in my parliamentary constituency of Amalapuram in Andhra Pradesh. So far, the ONGC invested more than Rs. 2,000 crore for drilling operations in the same place and now the ONGC is getting Rs. 200 crore per year. Two years back also, the hon'ble Minister had agreed in the House that the ONGC is going to give some funds for the development of that local area for laying of roads and some bridges. The people are also agitating for the laying of roads and all these things in the area. The ONGC is not taking any care. Now, the ONGC is entrusting the field Ravva structure and the ONGC project operations to private companies.

In this background, I want to know from the hon'ble Minister whether the private companies will take any interest for the development of the local area or not.

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA : Sir, I can only assure the hon'ble member that from our past experience we found that infrastructure requirement is a must, whether there is exploration activity or development activity. So, his concern about infrastructure development of his area, I believe, will take place automatically.

Deficit in Oil Pool Account ⁶

*801. Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated cumulative deficit in the oil pool account during 1994-95;

(b) the reasons for deficit in the oil pool account;

(c) the role of the Oil Coordination Committee with regard to oil pool account; and

(d) the mechanism being adopted by the Government to check huge deficit in the oil pool account?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA): (a) The estimated deficit in the current account of Oil Pool is likely to be about Rs. 3800 crore on 31.3.95 on cumulative basis.

(b) Pool accounts are expected to be self balancing in the long run, though there may be imbalances for some periods. Deficits have arisen in the pool account because the sales realisation from the products did not fully cover the costs incurred.

(c) The Oil Coordination Committee maintains and administers the pool account according to the pricing mechanism in existence.

⁶L.S. Deb., 1 June 1995

*Main Question was listed in the name of one more member

(d) The position of the oil pool account is periodically reviewed and corrective action taken.

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SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Andhra Pradesh has now become almost a gold mine for ONGC, particularly for the K.G. Project area, Ravva structure, particularly my constituency, Amalapuram. Because of the recent cyclone people faced a lot of problems in getting oil and kerosene. There was shortage of supply of oil. In view of this fact, I would like to know whether Government is going to set up any refinery in this K.G. Project area to increase oil production in Andhra Pradesh. The only oil refinery in Andhra Pradesh is situated in Visakhapatnam. The hon'ble Minister made a statement recently while visiting that place.

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SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : If the Government is not going to set up the oil refinery to increase the oil production, if any private persons come forward to set it up, is the Government going to give licence for setting up of the refinery in the K.G. Basin?

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA : Yes Sir, we welcome investments in refineries. If there is any proposal from the private sector to set up a refinery in Andhra Pradesh, it will be welcomed and they will receive full support from us.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Roads in Southern Coastal Areas⁷

803. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to State:

(a) whether the Union Government have received any proposals from the Southern States for laying of roads in the coastal areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

⁷L.S. Deb., 28 February 1992

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have been requesting for financial assistance for coastal roads as under:—

	Estimated Cost
(i) Tada—Kothapatnam—Machilipatnam Visakhapatnam—Ichapuram road (1000 Kms)	Rs. 730 crore
(ii) Madras—Pondicherry—Cuddalore— Nagapattinam—Tuticorin—Kanyakumari (737 Kms)	Rs. 142 crore

These roads form part of State Road network and as such the concerned State Governments are essentially responsible for their development. The Asian Development Bank has agreed to provide assistance for Madras-Cuddalore portion of the road at (ii) above in Tamil Nadu at estimated cost of Rs. 37 crore and the work is being executed by State PWD. The State Government have projected the remaining portion of road from Cuddalore to Kanyakumari costing Rs. 115.20 crore under central loan assistance programme for State Roads of Inter-State or Economic Importance to be taken up during 8th Plan. Since the outlay for 8th Plan is not yet known, it has not been possible to consider the scheme.

Insofar as Tada-Ichapuram Road is concerned, it is not possible to pose this work for financial assistance to Asian Development Bank at present as proposed by the State, since for their next highway loan the Bank is considering only the National Highways. In view of the huge cost of this project and limited resources under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes, it is also not possible to provide any financial assistance for this project by the Government of India.

Fisheries in Andhra Pradesh⁸

2118. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to State:

(a) the details of the scheme launched by the Government to promote prawn and aquaculture in Andhra Pradesh;

⁸L.S. Deb., 8 March 1994

(b) the assistance provided by the Government for this purpose during 1992-93 and 1993-94, scheme-wise; and

(c) the progress made so far, scheme-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) : (a) Some of the major schemes for promoting fish and shrimp aquaculture in Andhra Pradesh are:

- (i) Development of fresh water aquaculture through establishment of Fish Farmers' Development Agencies in 22 districts.
- (ii) Development of Brackishwater Aquaculture through establishment of Brackishwater Fish Farmers' Development Agencies in the 6 coastal districts and establishment of pilot shrimp farms at Polekkurru Phase I and II, and a shrimp seed hatchery at Suryalanka.
- (iii) Implementation of a World Bank assisted Shrimp and Fish Culture Project covering about 1400 ha. brackishwater and about 15,300 ha. reservoir area, etc.;

(b) Central assistance provided by the Government during 1992-93 and 1993-94 for these schemes is furnished below:—

	(Rs. in lakhs)	
	1992-93	1993-94
1. Development of Freshwater Aquaculture	22.00	22.00
2. Development of Brackishwater Aquaculture	73.12	60.00 (till Feb. 1993)
3. World Bank assisted Shrimp and Fish Culture Project	300.00*	89.00*

*Advance additional Central assistance

(c) The progress made so far, scheme-wise is as under:

	Area brought under aquaculture (ha.)	Farmers trained (Nos.)
1. Development of freshwater aquaculture	13022	7545
2. Development of brackishwater aquaculture through BFDAS	260	
3. World Bank assisted Shrimp and Fish Culture Project	The detailed designs and estimates for construction of shrimp farms in 2 sites have been approved. 11 landing sheds are to be constructed in selected reservoirs.	

Drilling of Wells⁹

3252. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the amount incurred in the K.G. Project area for drilling of wells during the last three years;

(b) the quantity of gas and crude available in the K.G. Project area;

(c) whether the Government are considering to increase the investment in the K.G. Project area for drilling operations during the Eighth Five Year Plan; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA): (a) The expenditure incurred in K.G. Project for drilling during 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 was Rs. 197.60 crore, Rs. 189.12 crore and Rs. 207.14 crore, respectively.

⁹L.S. Deb., 17 March 1994

(b) The average oil and gas production from K.G. Project during April 1993 to January 1994 was about 406 tonnes per day of crude oil and 1.65 MMSCMD of gas.

(c) and (d). The expenditure on drilling in K.G. Project during the Eighth Plan is estimated as under:—

(Rs. in crores)	
Year	Amount
1992-93	207.14
1993-94	231.65
1994-95	202.79
1995-96	354.60
1996-97	356.68

Drilling Operations¹⁰

3319. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have invited private agencies for drilling operations in K.G. Project area;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether there is any response from the private agencies for drilling operations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA) : (a) to (c). Government

¹⁰L.S. Deb., 17 March 1994

of India has, from time to time, invited private companies to participate in exploration of oil and gas in specified blocks in India, including the Krishna-Godavari basin. The details of blocks offered in the Krishna-Godavari basin are given below:

Round (Year)	No. of blocks offered	No. of blocks for which bids were received
III Round (1986)	7	4
IV Round (1991)	4	3
V Round (1993)	5	2
VI Round (1993)	4	-
VII Round (1994)	4	Last date for receipt of bids is 30.6.94.

No bids were received in the I and II Rounds for blocks in the Krishna-Godavari basin. Exploration work was carried out by private companies in four blocks in the Krishna-Godavari basin in Round III. One consortium is currently carrying out exploration activities in a block in the Krishna-Godavari basin under Round IV. In addition, three contractors are also carrying out drilling operations under contract with ONGC.

Fund for Construction of Bridge¹¹

4103. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Oil and Natural Gas Commission has given any funds for construction of bridges in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the amount spent so far on the bridges by ONGC in Andhra Pradesh?

¹¹L.S. Deb., 21 April 1994

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Oil and Natural Gas Commission Ltd. has so far spent Rs. 73.77 lakh towards construction/strengthening and repair of various small bridges and culverts in Andhra Pradesh. Oil and Natural Gas Commission Ltd. has also agreed to contribute Rs. 6 crore as its share for construction of a road bridge across river Vasista. Out of this amount, Oil and Natural Gas Commission Ltd. has paid Rs. 2 crore to the State Government and the balance is to be released depending on the progress of the construction of the bridge.

Allocation from CRF to Andhra Pradesh¹²

3910. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state the funds released to Andhra Pradesh out of CRF during each of the last three years, year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): The funds released to Andhra Pradesh out of Central Road Fund (CRF) during each of the last three years, year-wise, is as under:

(Rs. in lakhs)	
Year	Amount
1991-92	50.00
1992-93	33.00
1993-94	50.00

Blow-out in ONGC Oil Well¹³

118. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI*: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have made any assessment of the impact of the environment damage on account of the blow-out in the oil well at Pasarlapudi in Andhra Pradesh;

¹²L.S. Deb., 22 August 1994

¹³L.S. Deb., 14 February 1995

*This Question was listed in name of three other members also

- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken in this regard; and
- (d) the assistance being provided to the local people by the Union Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b). The Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board has commenced continuous monitoring of ambient air quality at the blow-out site. The details are as below:

- (a) Noise level ranges from 50 dBA to 115 dBA within a radius of 500 metres of the blow-out site.
 - (b) Hydrocarbons range from 1.0 to 8.0 micrograms per cubic metre.
 - (c) Oxides of Nitrogen range from 10.0 to 225.0 micrograms per cubic metre.
 - (d) Oxides of Sulphur range from 8.0 to 20.0 micrograms per cubic metre.
 - (e) Particulate matter ranges from 65.0 to 116.0 micrograms per cubic metre.
 - (f) Carbon Monoxide ranges from 700 to 7000 micrograms per cubic metre.
- (c) The Oil and Natural Gas Commission has been asked to take the following steps:
1. Continuous on-site monitoring for gases like carbon monoxide and hydrogen sulphide and to take appropriate precautionary measures to prevent any possible damage to the environment and human habitation in the area.
 2. Appropriate measures right now to prevent any possible adverse effects on the environment once the fire is brought under control.
 3. Necessary measures for preventing water pollution and to arrange for regular water quality monitoring in the surrounding areas.
- (d) As reported by the Oil and Natural Gas Commission there is no injury or casualty either to ONGC personnel or to the villagers nearby. As a precautionary measure, immediately after the fire, district authorities have evacuated people who wanted to leave from the area, including from the villages of Bodasakurtu, Peruru, Gopayalanka, Devarlanka, Mamidithota, Kadaripadu and Ventrikona.

Modernisation of Godavari and Krishna Delta Systems¹⁴

232. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have received any proposal from the Government of Andhra Pradesh for modernisation of Godavari Delta System and Krishna Delta System for clearance;

(b) if so, the present status of these proposals; and

(c) the time by which these proposals are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI VIDYACHARAN SHUKLA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Project reports on modernisation of Godavari Delta System and Krishna Delta System were received in the Central Water Commission, but were returned to the State Government as the project proposals needed substantial improvements. The State Government is required to resubmit modified reports after compliance of observations of the Central Appraising Agencies.

(c) Depends upon how soon the State Government complies with the observations of the Central Appraising Agencies.

Construction of Bridges¹⁵

3175. SHRI G.M.C. BALAYOGI : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Andhra Pradesh has written to the Union Government for sharing of the cost of *pucca* bridges to be built at Bodasakurru and Kotipalli across two branches of the Godavari river in East Godavari District;

(b) whether construction of these two bridges will cater to the gas-based industries in K.G. basin area; and

(c) if so, the present status of the proposal?

¹⁴ L.S. Deb., 17 August 1995

¹⁵ L.S. Deb., 24 August 1995

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The construction of two bridges were under consideration of GAIL for laying the gas pipeline to Nagarjuna Fertilisers and Chemicals Limited (NFCL).

(c) The pipeline to NFCL is being laid under the two rivers using the Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) method and the proposal for the bridges has been dropped.

DISCUSSIONS

Flood and Drought situation in the country¹⁶

At present, Andhra Pradesh is also facing floods. Particularly, there are floods in the Godavari Districts. Every year, floods in the Godavari and the Krishna cause heavy damage to paddy crops, resulting in loss of human lives and destruction of property. Every year, the Government of India as also the State Government are spending crores of rupees. But there is no proper solution because constructive methods are not being adopted.

My constituency, Amalapuram, is in the East Godavari District. It is one of the richest paddy and coconut producing areas of the country. The Konaseema area of this region is almost like an island with water on all the four sides. There are a number of canals and rivers in this area. Due to lack of proper modernisation, the drainage and protection systems are not fully functioning. This is resulting in heavy floods which are causing heavy loss to the coconut and paddy crops in this area. Nearly 12 lakh people are living in my constituency. The entire area is protected by flood banks along the 272 km. stretch. These flood banks were built long back, say nearly one hundred years back, and they are not able to withstand the recent floods. There is every danger to this area. If there is any breach in this flood bank, the entire area will be submerged in the Bay of Bengal and many people will lose their lives.

In this connection, I request the Central Government to make a proper plan for the modernisation of the irrigation system and to strengthen the flood bank. The drainage system should also be improved by the Central Government itself.

¹⁶Discussion on Flood and Drought situation in the country under Rule 193 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, L.S. Deb., 21 August 1991

Two months back, there were heavy floods in the Godavari river and there was a boat accident. I raised this matter under Rule 377 in this House. The Prime Minister also sanctioned Rs. 3 lakh for those people who lost their lives in the accident. Recently, I visited my constituency. An accident took place two days back. In this boat accident, 30 people lost their lives and another 20 people received injuries.

I request the Central Government that they must take concrete measures to control floods by strengthening the flood banks and by modernising the irrigation and drainage systems in this area.

Protection of Wild-Life¹⁷

I am very happy at being given an opportunity to speak on the Wildlife Protection Bill. I just want to give some suggestions to the hon'ble Minister.

Sir, while making the provisions of the Act more effective and stringent, due regard should also be given to the rights of the local people, particularly tribals. The rights and development of the tribal people have been neglected for years together. If the tribal areas are properly developed and the tribals are given educational and other facilities, the tribals themselves will protect the wildlife and also the forests in the country.

Secondly, I would like to mention that not only the wildlife in the forests, but the forests themselves are also very important. I say this because every year we are losing our forest cover. As per the information available, in the beginning while we had 45 per cent of forest land, now it is reduced to a mere 15 per cent. Since the hon'ble Minister is also incharge of forests, I request him to take care of this aspect. Since the forest land is getting reduced, you can develop afforestation programmes in the coastal areas because we have a very long coast. Even in our State, Andhra Pradesh, there is a long coastal area. The people who live in these coastal areas are fishermen by profession. Their living conditions are worse than the tribals living in other parts of the country. In this connection, I would request the hon'ble Minister to agree to the recommendation of the Government of Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh Government has recommended inclusion of fishermen, living in the coastal line, in the list of SCs and STs.

If afforestation is done properly, we can control cyclones. Due to these cyclones, a great amount of damage is done to the fertile land of the coastal areas. In Andhra Pradesh, there is a vast area of forests. There are a number of wild animals in these forests, but so far the Government has not set up any zoo in this area. I request the hon'ble Minister to locate one zoo in Andhra Pradesh, particularly in the East Godavari District, where thick forests are available.

¹⁷Discussion on the Wild-life Protection (Amendment) Bill, 1991, L.S. Deb., 16 September 1991

Uplift of Rural Masses¹⁸

I rise to speak on the Demands for Grants for Rural Development in the Budget. Since my interest is in rural development, on behalf of TDP, I oppose the Demands presented by the hon'ble Minister, as due importance is not given to rural development.

Rural development in India, over the years, has become a slogan, a catchy word for political manifestoes and a sobriquet for allocation of soft money for interest groups. The practical percolation of the huge expenditure is nothing but scattered development in selected areas of growth like agriculture, etc. but not in the total uplift of rural masses in all walks of life.

The economic, educational and health needs of a majority of rural masses, particularly those belonging to SC and ST and backward communities, are not being catered to fully under various sponsored programmes of the Government. Even after seven Five-Year Plans and allocation and expenditure of thousands of crores of rupees over the past forty years for overall rural development, the plight of rural areas remains as it is; they are so under-developed and the gap of growth and development between urban and rural areas is widening more and more.

The root causes for this pathetic and deplorable state of affairs are quite ostensibly known. The lack of planning and political will to implement programmes by checking the shortcomings in the implementation, namely grabbing of benefits by prosperous villagers, miscalculation of the poor among the beneficiaries, misuse of loans, brokerage and widespread and all pervasive corruption in the distribution of loans and subsidies.

It has become the philosophy of the Indian bureaucracy to meet the physical and monetary targets set out in the Annual Plan outlays for rural development without any regard to qualitative aspects or actual performance. There is no accountability on its part and apart from this, political groups at every level work within and outside the system to mount pressure on the bureaucracy for subserving their dominant class or caste interests. The net result of all this grim scenario is that the poor and destitute rural masses are left without getting their due share and their development has become a myth. I, while strongly deprecating the absence of commitment and political will for ensuring the development of rural masses, also suggest the following for making the various programmes under rural development more effective

¹⁸Discussion on Demands for Grants (General) 1992-93, Ministry of Rural Development, L.S. Deb., 8 April 1992

and result oriented instead of indiscriminate and unplanned pumping of money into the programmes.

The Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP) for which a provision of Rs. 375.64 crore is made in the Budget for the year 1992-93 has to be reviewed thoroughly and the district rural development agencies to which the funds are being given should be made accountable not only for meeting physical targets but also for constant monitoring of the progress of the families of the target groups of the rural poor which are identified as below poverty line families, to ensure that the subsidies provided to them are so utilised that they are brought up above the poverty line and that the objective of IRDP to provide income generating assets to identified families, is achieved. Without this monitoring, the pumping of funds in the pipeline of governmental expenditure is of no use. Not only this, rural growth centres should also be started in such of those villages which have some infrastructure facilities like transport, marketing, irrigation, etc., and the management of the rural growth centres should be handed over to the local panchayats with supervision by the district rural development agencies. The information on all these welfare schemes should be disseminated among those for whom they are intended.

A research and study group can also be engaged to look into the performance of IRDP and aspects like asset retention ability of the participants, the extent of rise in the standards of living, factors relating to wrong identification of beneficiaries and the methods to be evolved for right identification, avoidance of misuse of funds, evolving support mechanisms for maintenance of assets and for dissemination of information for proper understanding and awareness of the schemes of benefits among the rural poor. The State Planning Boards must be more responsive, and be weaned away from the classic target driven approach and statistical compilation of expenditure. These steps will go a long way in making the IRDP achieve its objectives and result in micro level implementation of rural development programmes.

The other important programme under rural development is the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. The professed objective of this scheme is to generate addition and strengthening of gainful employment for the unemployed and under-employed men and women and to improve the quality of life in rural areas and creation of sustained employment by improving the rural economic infrastructure. Construction of houses for SCs and STs and freed bonded-labourers below poverty line as well as opening irrigation wells free of cost to the poor and small and marginal farmers belonging to the above categories are also contemplated under the JRY scheme. In the Budget for 1992-93

provision of funds to the tune of Rs. 2046.21 crore is also made. The performance evaluated during the last two years reveals that funds under this scheme are generally expended to create working mandays and to pay wages for rural labour involved in developmental programmes. This scheme has not attained the objective of creating gainful employment to generate, in turn, durable community assets. The very purpose of this scheme is to open up avenues of employment for the rural masses below the poverty line on a sustained and durable basis. But what is practically seen is the absence of mechanism for determining local priorities and preparing projects which may build up infrastructure in rural areas on a self sustained basis and the mandays are utilised on unproductive and unsustaining schemes. The allocated funds are shown expended for the payment of wages to labourers in rural areas generally and the lot of labourers remains unchanged once the one-time payment of the project is over and thereafter they are bound to seek new job avenues. This also has led to the exit of educated youth from rural areas because of lack of gainful employment opportunities for them. As a result, the rural scene has not improved and the latent power of the rural educated youth in the villages is left unutilised. As such, I suggest that the funds under the JRY should be utilised for human resource development in every village and the educated youth should also be given opportunity to man schools, health centres, cooperative agencies and other viable and productive projects for the overall development of rural areas in every sector. The funds under the JRY scheme are, therefore, required to be utilised meticulously with proper planning and for yielding results for a sustained growth of the rural economy.

Similarly, there are various other programmes like the Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), safe drinking water scheme under MNP, and rural sanitation and drought prone areas programme. The multiplicity of government agencies and Departments undertaking those programmes is also causing difficulty in the integration of one programme with another and the lack of coordination for comprehensive implementation of the above programmes among inter-Departmental authorities is another stumbling block in rural development. All these programmes could be integrated under one programme and one Department, for effective and result-oriented implementation of the schemes for better rural development.

I feel that the need of the hour is not just higher and higher Budget allocations but an overall comprehensive, planned and integrated action plan for facilitating the success of the various rural development programmes. In this context, the Demands for Grants may be reviewed and necessary action may be taken.

Lastly, I want to suggest one more thing. Rural development can only be achieved through proper implementation of land reforms; decentralisation of power to local bodies like Panchayati Raj institutions; and proper implementation of literacy and family planning programmes. We have got a three-tier Panchayati Raj system. But the Panchayati Raj system now-a-days lacks the financial and political power to implement the proper programmes for the betterment of the rural areas. The Government is intending to bring the 72nd Amendment Bill for the betterment of local bodies in this country. I would request the hon'ble Minister to make provisions for direct elections to the local bodies in the Panchayati Raj system. Then only, the real local body system can exist in the rural areas, which can be useful for the development of the rural areas.

Railways—Need for Speedy Development of Backward Areas¹⁹

I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the Supplementary Demands for Grants for expenditure of the Central Government on Railways. The Railways have mentioned that keeping in view the need to bring about a speedy development of the transportation infrastructure of the country as well as the need to speed up the development of backward areas, they have embarked upon a number of plans for inclusion in the Eighth Plan. Mine is almost a backward area, particularly as far as the Railways are concerned. There is one line going from Vijayawada to Howrah. It is almost a parallel line to our district. Ours is one of the biggest districts in the country with a population of 50 lakhs. Only one single line is there. It is almost a by-pass line to the East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh. So, I request the hon'ble Minister to look into this.

There is a line between Kakinada and Kotipalli which was abandoned during the Second World War. But so far, it has not been restored even though all the other lines which were abandoned during the Second World War have been restored. A survey was conducted. The survey suggested that there was a very good prospect and it would be a more profit-oriented line if it were restored between Kakinada and Kotipalli and extended upto Narsapur. I request the hon'ble Minister to consider this matter.

The General Manager of the South-Central Railway is not sending a proper report to the Government about the feasibility of the line. So, kindly take a special interest. The inclusion of this line in the Eighth Plan is very essential.

¹⁹Discussion on Supplementary Demands for Grants (Railways) 1992-93 and Demands for Excess Grants (Railways) 1998-99, L.S. Deb., 6 August 1992

Amalapuram is my parliamentary constituency having a population of 20 lakh. But no single railway line is touching my constituency. I request the hon'ble Minister to kindly look into the matter.

One more thing is with regard to accidents. As per the Railway reports, from 1.5.92 to 30.6.92, in a matter of one month, 104 railway accidents took place in nine Zones. It is a very sad thing. These accidents took place mainly due to the failure of railway staff, equipment failure, negligence of road-users, sabotage, etc. In my district, recently within a period of 44 hours, two accidents took place—one affected the Godavari Express near Nidadavolu and 24 hours earlier, there was another accident involving the Konark Express at the same place. According to the information available, these accidents took place due to poor maintenance of the railway lines.

I have also come to know that the Railways have stopped the recruitment of gangmen who are in charge of the railway lines. Because of that also, accidents are taking place. I request the hon'ble Minister to look into this matter and see that proper maintenance is carried out to the railway lines. Then only can you stop railway accidents.

In the 104 accidents, 51 persons have lost their lives and 146 persons sustained injuries. So far, no compensation has been paid by the Railways to the relatives of those who lost their lives or to the injured persons. I request the hon'ble Minister to please look into the matter.

There is a train between Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad which is running five times a week. I request the hon'ble Minister to make it a daily service. Then only can we handle the rush of passengers from Visakhapatnam, from East Godavari and West Godavari to reach the State capital, Hyderabad.

Lastly, I would like to mention one point. Since the inception of the South Central Railway, no Telugu General Manager has been posted there. So, I request the hon'ble Minister to kindly post a Telugu General Manager in the South Central Railway, so that he can at least identify the problems of Andhra Pradesh and cater to the needs of the people.

My next submission to the hon'ble Minister is regarding the haltage of some trains at Samarlakota because this is almost a junction to reach the interior of the East Godavari District which is one of the most populated districts in the country. The Coromandel Express runs between Howrah and Madras. I request the hon'ble Minister to give proper instructions to the authorities concerned to stop the Coromandel Express at Samarlakota which is the only railway junction in the East Godavari District. There is a long

pending demand from the people of East Godavari to link up Kakinada railway station with the mainland because this is a district headquarter and as a port station, it is earning good profit on the transport side. So, I request the hon'ble Minister to link Kakinada to the mainland to enable the people of East Godavari to travel without difficulty. I request the Minister to take into consideration all these points and do justice to this neglected area.

National Highways — Life-Line of the Nation²⁰

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the National Highways (Amendment) Bill. In this connection, I would like to bring to the notice of the hon'ble Minister certain aspects with regard to accidents on National Highways. Though the Government is collecting a lot of taxes on National Highways, it is not paying proper attention to eliminate accidents. Every year by way of insurance claims, they are paying crores of rupees to those who suffered in accidents on the National Highways.

The Government should take necessary steps to control accidents. The purpose behind the introduction of this Bill is to invite private persons to construct some National Highways, bridges and tunnels and also for levying taxes on the National Highways. It automatically increases the freight charges and also the prices of diesel and petroleum. This also affects the prices of all the essential commodities as they are being transported by trucks. So, I request the hon'ble Minister to take proper steps in this regard, so that the prices of these commodities do not increase.

In this context, I would like to bring to the notice of the hon'ble Minister that the Government of Andhra Pradesh has sent a number of proposals to the Central Government. The length of National Highways in Andhra Pradesh is only 2587 kms. As per the norms of the Government of India, the length of National Highways in Andhra Pradesh has to be 5540 kms. Therefore, proposals for the upgradation of 22 State roads as National Highways to a length of 6410 kms. have been sent by the State Government from time to time. Approval of the Central Government is awaited in respect of all these 22 proposals.

With regard to the Central Road Fund Schemes, the Government of India, Ministry of Surface Transport, in their letter dated 3.1.89, informed that as per the revised resolution of Parliament passed on 13.5.88, a sum of Rs. 20.76 crore is likely to accrue annually to Andhra Pradesh under the Central Road Fund and requested the Government of Andhra Pradesh to draw up a list of

²⁰Discussion on the National Highways (Amendment) Bill, 1992, L.S. Deb., 19 August 1992

works to be included under this programme for a period of six years, that is from 1989-90 to 1994-95. As per the guidelines communicated by the Government of India, Ministry of Surface Transport, 24 proposals to the tune of Rs. 290.95 crores were sent to the Government of India for release of funds under the Central Road Fund. The Government of India has sanctioned only four proposals to the tune of Rs. 7.81 crore. The remaining 20 proposals to the tune of Rs. 283.14 crore are still to be approved by the Government of India. So, I request the hon'ble Minister that the proposal regarding upgradation of 22 State roads as National Highways and the other proposal for release of funds under the Central Road Fund should be cleared by the Government of India immediately.

Andhra Pradesh is a coastal State. The Government of India has proposed to upgrade the State road from Tada to Ichapuram as a National Highway. Tada is in Tamil Nadu and Ichapuram is on the Orissa-Andhra Pradesh border. If this road is developed, it will serve the development of the coastal States of India, as it covers almost four States. This will also help the fishermen in a great way. They can export fish to other States. So, I request the hon'ble Minister to kindly look into this matter and clear this Ichapuram-Tada road as early as possible.

There is one more proposal from the Government of Andhra Pradesh. There is an inter-State road in Andhra Pradesh, connecting Pondicherry from Kakinada to Yanam *via* Tallarevu. It involves only Rs. 3.6 crore. This proposal is pending with the Central Government for a long time. I request the hon'ble Minister to clear this project.

Lastly, I would like to say that there is no National Highway in my constituency, Amalapuram. The population, particularly in my district, is about 50 lakh. More than half of the countries of the world have less population than that of my district. We have been asking the Central Government for the clearance of two projects, that is a bridge across the Godavari connecting Yedurulanka with Yanam and another bridge on Gautami, linking Mukteswaram with Kotipalli. You may kindly look into the matter. I request the hon'ble Minister to take proper action in this regard.

Restoration of railway line²¹

I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the Demands for Supplementary Grants (Railways).

²¹Discussion on Supplementary Demands for Grants (Railways) 1993-94, L.S. Deb., 25 August 1993

In this connection, I want to submit to the hon'ble Railway Minister that Railways so far have neglected the only line in the country which was abandoned during the Second World War *i.e.* the Kakinada-Kotipalli railway line. This line was situated in my State, Andhra Pradesh. It is very painful to see that seven lines were taken away in this country during the Second World War and out of the seven, six lines were restored except the Kakinada-Kotipalli line which was situated in my constituency.

The late Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru also stated in the House that all the railway lines which were taken away during the Second World War would be restored. The Railways have restored six railway lines except the line in my constituency, Kakinada-Kotipalli. It is a small line of just 43 kms. and the cost of this project is about Rs. 40 crore. I do not know why the Railways have neglected this line so far, even after Independence and Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru's promise in the House. This year they have sanctioned something for an up-to-date survey of the above line.

The population of my district is about 50 lakh. They are agitating for this railway line and the Railways have so far not revived this line.

I request the hon'ble Railway Minister to kindly speed up the work and fulfil the dreams of the people of my area. This is not a new line, it is just the restoration of the old line which was taken away 50 years back. The Kakinada-Kotipalli line will not only benefit my parliamentary constituency of Amalapuram but it will also help in transporting cargo such as paddy, coconut, commercial crops, crude oil, etc. which are transported by road thus creating bottlenecks and congestion.

They propose further extension of this line from Kotipalli to Narsapuram *via* Amalapuram. It is also worth considering for the speedy development of the coastal belt and oil and natural gas exploration work in the Krishna-Godavari basin.

My constituency is exporting nearly Rs. 1000 crore worth of coconut, paddy and other commercial products every year. All these goods are being transported by road only. All of them are agricultural products. The ONGC also is transporting Rs. 1000 crore worth of crude oil and gas from this year through tankers. If this railway line is restored, the Railways will make a huge amount of profit. I request the hon'ble Railway Minister to consider this case and execute this work speedily.

I have only two more points to make. A survey was done by the Railway with regard to the line from Bhadrachalam to Kovvur. It is in a backward

area and it cuts short the distance between Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada; it extends to about one hundred kilometres. The survey was done twice but nothing has materialised.

One more point. Kakinada is the headquarters of my district and it has also got a very good port. But, it is not connected with the main line. Out of the nine railway zones in the country, the South-Central Railway is the only zone which is showing lot of profits. The Vijayawada Division of the South-Central Railway alone is fetching Rs. 260-270 crore out of which Kakinada port station is getting Rs. 100-120 crore every year for the Railways. But the Railways are not undertaking any development works in this area. I request the hon'ble Minister to kindly undertake all these works in this area expeditiously.

Coconut Cultivation—Welfare of Workers²²

After Kerala, Andhra Pradesh is the highest coconut producing State in the country. But, unfortunately, neither from the State Government nor from the Central Government, the coconut workers are getting any support. In Andhra Pradesh, the Coconut and Coir Boards are far away from the coconut farmers and the coconut workers because the entire crop is raised in the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh whereas these offices are situated in the State Capital of Hyderabad. I wish to point out that no help is provided from these offices either to the farmers or to the coconut workers. So I request the hon'ble Minister to shift these Boards to the coastal area immediately.

Andhra Pradesh is exporting more than Rs. 2000 crore worth of coconut every year. In my constituency, that is, Amalapuram, we are exporting nearly Rs. 1000 crore worth of coconut every year.

In this background, I would like to bring to your kind notice that several lakhs of labourers are working in the coconut sector. They harvest coconuts from the trees, remove the outer jute and undertake other related activities. Sometimes, these poor labourers who climb the trees to cut and bring down coconuts fall and die. As things stand today, accident insurance schemes do not cover these labourers, while the toddy tappers are covered under that scheme. The Government was good enough to introduce accident insurance scheme for the benefits of toddy tappers who die or receive serious injuries while they climb the trees. There is every justification for the introduction of a similar scheme for the benefit of the coconut labourers. We wish to draw your attention to the fact that India stands in the third place in the area under

²²Discussion on the Coir Industry (Amendment) Bill, 1993, L.S. Deb., 13 May 1994

coconut cultivation as well as production of nuts. Coconut is grown in 1.5 million hectares producing 11.3 thousand million nuts. Our country is able to produce 17.3 per cent of coconut in the whole world. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are important States from the point of view of coconut cultivation. In Andhra Pradesh, coconut plantations are grown in 65 thousand hectares. The labourers working in the coconut sector are requesting the Government to introduce an accident insurance scheme to help them, especially those who die or receive injuries while climbing trees. We request you to immediately examine this important issue and take necessary steps in this regard.

The farmers are facing a lot of problems, particularly in the case of price fixation of coconuts. Sometimes the price is increased to Rs. 4000 per thousand nuts and sometimes it is coming down to Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2,000 per thousand nuts. So, I request the hon'ble Minister that there should be a support price to the coconut farmers.

Lastly, I would like to request the hon'ble Minister to make a fresh legislation for the benefit of coconut farmers and the workers.

Emancipation of Downtrodden²³

Sir, kindly permit me to speak in Telugu.

At the outset, I would like to thank you for permitting me to speak on behalf of my party on the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth Reports of the erstwhile Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 which were laid on the Table of the House on 9 May 1989 and 29 August 1990, respectively, and the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Reports of the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 which were laid on the Table of this hon'ble House on 5 March 1986, 26 August 1987, 4 May 1988 and 21 November 1988 respectively.

Sir, our Constitution directs the Government, duly elected by the people, to strive for the emancipation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. According to Article 46 of our Constitution:

“The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

²³Discussion on the 28th and 29th Reports of SC and ST Commissioner and the 5th, 6th and 7th Reports of the National Commission for SC & ST, L.S. Deb., 24 August 1994

It also directs the Government to implement various schemes which are meant for the development and progress of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and to see that these hapless brethren of ours are not subjected to any kind of exploitation or injustice. All of us are well aware of this important provision enshrined in our Constitution. But, what is the reality today? How far the successive Governments have succeeded in implementing the provisions of this Article in letter and spirit? I am constrained to remark that the utilisation of funds for various schemes meant for the progress of the SCs and STs and countless number of legislations which intend to provide these people a respectable place in our society have failed to bring about any transformation. I am sorry to say so. Funds have been misused and legislations have been ignored. To cite an example, the Himachal Government has diverted the funds allocated for tribal welfare to purchase a helicopter. If this is the state of affairs one can well imagine how various schemes are being implemented by other States. Not only that, 50 crore rupees allocated exclusively for the rehabilitation of scavengers have also been diverted for other purposes, depriving totally the beneficiaries the benefit of the scheme meant to eliminate scavenging. If the situation continues to be like this, I do not know how the Government can succeed in its efforts to bring the most deprived sections above the poverty line and bring them into the mainstream. The tardy implementation of schemes is quite alarming. As though this is not sufficient enough, funds allocated for various schemes meant exclusively for the SCs and STs are being diverted to non-plan expenditure and for the payment of salaries and allowances for the employees by certain State Governments. For scavengers' rehabilitation, the Central Government provided funds to the State Governments. Only four States—Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh — have implemented the scheme so far. Most other States have not yet identified scavengers so far. The identification should have been over by November. These instances are sufficient enough to prove the cavalier attitude of the various State Governments in diverting funds released by the Central Government for various schemes. Even the Union Minister for Welfare has stated in no uncertain terms that the States have been continuously diverting funds meant for the various welfare programmes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for various other purposes. The result is that the fruits of various developmental schemes have not reached the intended beneficiaries. Even the funds provided for the construction of hostels for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students have not been spared. These funds have also been diverted by the State Governments with lame excuses that the land has not been acquired, etc. Excuses are many and handy for the State Governments for diverting funds. This fact has been accepted and endorsed by none other than the Union Minister for Welfare. The special Central assistance released

by the Central Government is no exception. Sir, if all these funds are diverted for other purposes, how will these downtrodden people cross the poverty line? The Central Government should view this matter very seriously and take appropriate remedial measures.

We have entered the 48th year of our independence. Yet, it is rather shocking to find that atrocities are still being perpetrated on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes even to this day. It is a matter which makes a civilized society hang its head in shame. Some people may consider that these atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are purely problems concerning these communities and the rest of the society has nothing to do with it. What is surprising is the lukewarm attitude of the Government towards this problem. Sir, it is not in the best interests of society to allow the atrocities on these helpless people to continue. Both the society and the Government should realise the existing social inequalities and at once take steps to wipe them off; otherwise, if these social inequalities are allowed to continue and if the Government continues to ignore the unmitigated sufferings of poor Scheduled Castes and Tribes, on account of atrocities, it will not be good for the society. Perhaps, the society and the Government may have to pay dearly one day. Both the society and the Government should at once realise this truth and take steps to remove these inequalities. By enacting several laws, you cannot wipe off atrocities on SCs & STs. What is needed is the fact that the society should wake up and treat their SC/ST brethren equally. Legislations alone will not solve the problem. Already we have several Acts at our disposal. The Protection of Civil Rights Act and the Protection from Atrocities Act, etc. are already there. In spite of so many Acts, the atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are still continuing, nay, are on the increase. The growing atrocities on these most deprived sections bear ample testimony to the negligence and contempt with which the society treats them. The establishment of Special Courts will go a long way in containing the atrocities on these people. And, persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should be appointed as members of these Special Tribunals. Then only will it become possible to provide social justice to them. Then only will it be possible to realise the dream of a socialistic pattern of society that the Constitution speaks of. Hence, I appeal to the Government to constitute Special Courts to deal with cases of atrocities exclusively and appoint persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as members of these Tribunals. Adequate compensation should be paid to the families of the victims of these atrocities. The compensation should be at least Rs. 5 lakhs, so that the families of the victims are rehabilitated in a reasonable way.

Regarding poverty alleviation programmes, Sir, we have quite a number of schemes such as I.R.D.P., N.R.E.P., S.E.P.U.P., R.I.E.P., D.I.R., etc. All these programmes are meant to improve the status of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes economically. But all these programmes are not being implemented in letter and spirit. These schemes have not been successful so far, because the nationalised banks are reluctant to sanction loans to persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as envisaged in many of these schemes. Because of this reason, these programmes have not taken off the ground in many cases. Hence, for the successful implementation of these schemes which are meant for improving the economic condition of the SCs and STs and other weaker sections, I suggest that a Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes National Bank be set up forthwith to meet their financial requirement under various schemes exclusively.

Sir, I want to say a few words on land assignment. The assignment of wastelands to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is a sure step towards the economic emancipation of these sections. But, unfortunately, what is happening now is that these wastelands continue to be in the illegal occupation of big landlords. The Government should take steps to acquire these lands and distribute them among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This will go a long way in improving the economic conditions of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. I also take this opportunity to request the Government to acquire surplus land by speedy implementation of land reforms and redistribute it among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The distribution of wastelands and surplus land among these people will go a long way in bringing about transformation in their lives. For this purpose, it is essential to have a special Department headed by a senior officer under the Ministry of Rural Development for better implementation and monitoring of the progress. I hope and trust, that the Government would initiate action to carve out a separate Department soon. At present, the Government is releasing a meagre amount to these people for purchasing lands. I request the Government to enhance the amount as the present amount is too inadequate to purchase any land.

Sir, the income limit for sanctioning scholarships to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students was fixed long ago. The income limit has also become an obstacle for gaining employment. Hence, I appeal to the Government to enhance the ceiling to Rs. 50,000 at once. This step would prove to be a boon to the educated youth among these sections.

The Budget allocation for the economic development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been negligible all these years. I request the Government to set apart at least 30 per cent of the Union Budget for the allround development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They constitute 25 per cent to 34 per cent of the total population. Not only that, they are contributing nearly 60 per cent to the economy of the country. Hence it is imperative that these sections deserve a better deal.

About job reservations to these sections, one should not consider it as a gift doled out to these people. They deserve it. After studying the situation in depth, the founding fathers of our Constitution, especially Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, had incorporated reservations in the jobs for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in our Constitution. But, unfortunately, no one is bothered about implementing these guarantees accorded by the Constitution in letter and spirit. There are several vacancies in various Departments. Barring Class IV, all the reserved jobs in Groups A, B and C are vacant. No effort has been made to recruit Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates to fill up the reserved quota. The 15 per cent and 7 per cent quota of reservation is confined only to Class IV jobs like Peons and Attendants. In-group A category, as against the reservation quota of 15 per cent for SCs, the actual recruitment does not exceed 8 per cent on all India basis. As for Scheduled Tribes, the situation is still worse. Their number hovers around 2 per cent in categories like Group B. This shows how even the provisions of the Constitution are being ignored by one and all. Reservation in jobs was meant for economic development and improving social status. But, as usual, the implementation of these provisions is being totally ignored. In Public Sector Undertakings, the SCs and STs are totally ignored. The injustice meted out to these people in PSUs is total and complete. Realising the gravity of the situation, the Government should take steps and issue necessary orders not only to provide reservation facility in all Public Sector Undertakings but also implement it strictly. Also, the Central Government should direct the State Governments to implement the reservation policy very strictly. Many State Governments are not implementing the reservation policy and they lack any sense of urgency and seriousness. Many posts pertaining to quota are being de-reserved. They are not filling the vacancies reserved under quota by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates. The State Governments are neither maintaining records nor rosters of the SCs and STs. Hence, I appeal to the Central Government to issue necessary orders to the State Governments to implement the reservation policy very strictly.

As part of the liberalisation programme, the Government is going in for privatising the public sector units and even nationalised banks. This privatisation is inflicting a death blow to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minority sections of the society. With privatisation, all the reservations available to these sections in Government Undertakings will be taken away at once. The private companies and undertakings are averse to the policy of reservations. Hence, the Government should come forward with legislation to guarantee reservation in the Private Sector. Thus, the Government can save SCs and STs and other minority sections from being deprived of the reservation facility duly guaranteed by the Constitution. I hope, the Government would come forward with the necessary Bill before this House soon.

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court on the Mandal Commission has curtailed the Constitutional safeguards in respect of job reservation to a great extent. The Bench has also observed that there should not be any reservation in promotions. The rules regarding reservation will be ineffective after 5 years. This has created widespread disappointment among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes throughout the country. As this opinion was expressed in the context of the Mandal Commission, doubts have arisen whether it is applicable in the case of SCs and STs also. The matter has been represented to the hon'ble Speaker by the MP's Forum several times. It is necessary that the Central Government should clarify the position and communicate the same to the State Governments also. It is also necessary to amend the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution for the purpose. Inclusion in the Ninth Schedule provides immunity from litigation and hence to set the matter at rest, reservations in matters of appointment and promotion for SCs and STs should be included in that Schedule by amending the Constitution.

Finally, Sir, I want to say a few words about various Departments which have been looking after the work pertaining to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. What is most unfortunate is that these Departments, exclusively dealing with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are not being headed or manned by senior I.A.S. officers belonging to these sections. They are being manned by officers belonging to other sections of the society. That is the reason why these Departments have failed miserably in doing justice to the SCs and STs. Thus, these Departments have been totally alienated from the communities for whom they are meant. In the offices at the district and State level, and in the organisations like Scheduled Castes Financial Corporation, Scheduled Castes Welfare Corporation and Welfare Departments, the heads belong to some other communities. In certain cases, there are no officers at all. Because of the negligent attitude of the Governments concerned to appoint SC and ST candidates to man these important organisations and Departments, they could not do any justice to the people for whom they work. I also fervently appeal to the Central Government to issue necessary instructions to the State Governments to appoint only officers belonging to SC and ST as heads of the offices/organisations dealing with these communities.

Sir, the tribals are totally ignored by one and all. The fruits of development have not reached them as yet. For the development of Scheduled Tribes, Project Offices have been opened in these areas. But these offices have no officers. They are headless all the time. No one is prepared to work in the tribal areas. If there are no officers, how can these offices function? There is no monitoring whatsoever by the Government. The lands belonging to the tribals are being snatched away by non-tribals. These non-tribals are exploiting the tribals. That is the main reason why naxalism is gaining ground in the tribal areas. The Government should step in before it is too late to strengthen various organisations working for the development of *girijans* and see to it that they get their due share in the economy and progress.

The mid-day meal scheme was under operation in many States some years ago. But this scheme is now being implemented only in a few States. Tamil Nadu is in the forefront in implementing the scheme. The mid-day meal scheme contributes substantially in bringing down the drop-out rate, especially among the SC and ST students. This scheme encourages students to pursue their studies. The Union Government should issue a circular to all the State Governments to implement the mid-day meal scheme compulsorily. It should be made mandatory.

The all-round progress of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is possible only through education. Without education, there cannot be any development. To mould the future of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes children, the Government should establish residential schools in their areas.

As I mentioned earlier, there are several vacancies in many Departments which are yet to be filled up under the reservation quota. Even in Delhi, in the capital city of India, in a prime institution like the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, there are several vacancies which are yet to be filled up by SC and ST candidates. Yet they are not recruiting SC and ST candidates. We have requested the hon'ble Minister several times in the past to intervene in the matter and help in filling up the vacancies by recruiting SC and ST candidates. What is more, the authorities of this institution are now trying to de-reserve these vacancies. I appeal to the Government to intervene at least now and see that SC and ST candidates are recruited for the existing vacancies in the institution.

Equality of Opportunity²⁴

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and also the hon'ble Minister for bringing this Bill before the House. Through you, I would like to request the hon'ble Minister that all the States should be given equal share. The problems of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes differ from one State to another. The problems of these communities differ from the social and economic angles. If the students or the teaching staff are appointed from all parts of the country, then they can know each other's problems.

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are facing a lot of problems with regard to their promotions and appointments. I hope there will not be any problem with regard to filling up seats as far as this university is concerned.

²⁴Discussion on the Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University Bill, 1994. L.S. Deb., 26 August 1994

Proper Road Network for economic development²⁵

Sir, while speaking on the National Highways (Amendment) Bill, 1995 I agree that there should be a proper road network for the economic development of every country. But due to financial constraints, the Government is not allocating sufficient funds for the road maintenance in this country. That is why the Government is allowing private people to participate in this road network and for laying and maintenance of the roads.

In this connection, I request the Government to keep in mind that it should not be a shifting of the burden from the Government to the public because ultimately the public has to repay the amounts spent on the roads by the private people.

The Government should give a clear-cut direction while giving sanction for laying these roads by the private people.

The Government must keep in mind the fact that there are two lakh villages in this country. These villages are not having even a metal road. First of all, the Government should recognise that roads are important to reach the villages.

We can see from the figures that the Government has not achieved the target for laying the National Highways. Our target is to have 60,000 km of National Highways before 2000 AD. We have laid only 400 km of National Highways in the last 14 years. Not only the laying of roads, but the maintenance of roads is also very important.

In this connection, I draw the attention of the hon'ble Minister to a very important matter. There is a road in my parliamentary constituency in Andhra Pradesh which connects Ravulapalem. It is National Highway No. 5. Its length is 2 km. Every day a minimum of three to four people are dying because of traffic congestion on the road. For the last four to five years, officials have been saying that the Government has given sanction to improve the road, but the Department is not taking action. As such, the maintenance of the National Highways is very important. I would request the hon'ble Minister to give a clear direction to the Department people to widen this road.

The Kakinada Port is now being developed with the aid of the Asian Development Bank. The Central Government and the State Government are investing Rs. 3 crore to Rs. 4 crore on this port. If it is not connected to the National Highway, this investment will not be useful.

The Government is already forelaying the road from Visakhapatnam to Anakapalli with the aid of the Asian Development Bank. It should be extended upto Kakinada. From Kakinada, it should be extended up to Kathipudi.

²⁵Discussion on the National Highways (Amendment) Bill, 1995. L.S. Deb., 31 May 1995

There is also one coastal road from Tada to Ichapuram. It is an important road between Madras and Andhra Pradesh. If it is developed, you can divert the entire produce from coastal side also. A number of industries are coming up on the coastal side. Some ports are also coming up there. I would request the hon'ble Minister to develop them. Some investments have already been made for the development of the Tada-Ichapuram road. I request that some more funds may be released for the development of the coastal roads. The matter relating to inter-State road between Yanam and Kakinada is still pending in the Ministry. Please release funds for the above road.

The roads between Vijayawada and Hyderabad and Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam should be forelaid. It should be National Highway No. 5. It should be developed.

Coming to the State of Andhra Pradesh, the length of National Highways in Andhra Pradesh is 2,587 km. As per the norms of the Government of India, the length of National Highways in Andhra Pradesh has to be 5,540 km. Proposals for the upgradation of 22 State roads to a length of 6410 km were sent to the Government of India for conversion into National Highways. Later, on a suggestion from the Government of India, these 22 proposals were consolidated into nine proposals to a length of 4,812 km and were sent to the Government of India. But these proposals are still pending with the Central Government. The proposal for the roads of Hyderabad-Warangal-Mulugu-Nagaram-Venkatapuram of 290 km and for Warangal-Karimnagar-Jagityal of 120 km to be converted into National Highways should be sanctioned by the Central Government. They are still pending with the Central Government. The Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary have requested the Central Government a number of times but still they are pending.

I request the hon'ble Minister to clear these proposals to convert these roads into National Highways expeditiously.

Thank you very much.

Uplift of Dalits²⁶

Madam, thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak. Since 1992 onwards the SC/ST forum of Parliamentarians has been requesting the hon'ble Welfare Minister, Shri Sitaram Kesriji to bring a Bill in view of the Supreme Court judgement which has created a lot of confusion in the minds of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people, particularly in the appointment and promotions.

²⁶Discussion on the Constitution 86th (Amendment) Bill, 1995, L.S. Deb., 2 June 1995

Anyhow Madam, at last the Government has brought a Bill. I am also supporting the Eighty-Sixth Constitutional (Amendment) Bill. Even after 46 years of Independence, atrocities are inflicted on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It is because their economic and social status has not improved. Still atrocities are committed against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, particularly Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women in the society. But this is not the situation wanted by the forefathers, the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi and the father of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. They wanted that ten years after Independence, the economic and social position of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should be improved. That is why they have given some reservations in the Indian Constitution. You can imagine, still there is backlog even in the Class I, Class II, Class III and Class IV jobs. If you see the figures in Class I, the backlog is 2.1 per cent, in Class II it is 3.2 per cent as in Class III it is 6 per cent, whereas in Class IV, the percentage of reservation is completely filled. It shows the intention of the Government. It shows how the Government is implementing the reservation for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in this country. Just enacting a law is not enough; the commitment of the Government to implement that law is more important to uplift the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people in this country. In this context, I want to say that the educational facilities should be increased for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. At the same time, land reforms are also very important. If the excess land is distributed among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, their economic position will improve and they can also reach the mainstream of the society. Then only the society can be in a good position because the integration and development of the country also depends upon the SCs and STs, Backward Classes and other minorities. They are also important.

My second submission is with regard to the private sector. Now the Government's policy is to privatise every industry. In this connection, I would like to say that reservation in promotions should be continued for SCs and STs in the private sector too.

I would like to draw the attention of the hon'ble Minister towards a few points. All the Central and State Government Public Undertakings, Private Sector Institutions/agencies which are financed or aided by the Centre and or State Governments and which fail to implement the reservation quota shall be punishable under the Act. Recruiting and Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) shall be made responsible for non-implementation and shall be tried under the provisions of the Act or under the Indian Penal Code.

Reservations at the level of Secretaries, Additional Secretaries, Joint Secretaries to the Government of India and State Governments, Chairmen and Managing Directors and Directors of Public Sector Undertakings shall be strictly implemented. All those recruiting agencies and DPCs which fail to implement reservation quota shall be held responsible and remarks made in their Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs).

Reservation quota in the fields such as scientific and technical Departments and Public Sector Undertakings is not properly implemented, so detailed guidelines shall be given to such agencies for strict compliance with the provisions of this Act.

Provisions of this Act shall be applied to judicial institutions in the appointments and promotions of judges and also in the non-judicial posts of lower courts, High Courts and the Supreme Court.

In all those cases of harassment of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees which are brought to notice, persons responsible for such behaviour shall be booked under the relevant Act and they may be tried.

The Secretary of a Department, Chairman or Managing Director of a Corporation or transferring authority in all other cases shall be held responsible for not posting SC and ST officials in key posts in proportion to their strength. Detailed guidelines must be given to all the Heads of Departments or Secretaries to the Government for strict compliance of the provisions and they be held responsible for non-compliance, if any.

A thorough review of ACRs of SC and ST official shall be invariably handled only by the senior SC and ST officials before the inclusion in the respective meeting of all of DPCs. Incidents such as exclusion of SC and ST officials in the DPCs have been on the rise and hence this provision is necessary.

The Constitution guarantees, as per Article 16, Clause (4), reservation to the SC and ST and other backward classes. I request the hon'ble Minister to bring a comprehensive legislation for the Other Backward Classes people who are facing a lot of problems with regard to recruitment and promotions.

There is a long pending demand of the Scheduled Caste Christians. They are not in a position to enjoy the constitutional guarantees simply because they have changed their religion. Therefore, those Scheduled Caste people who have taken Christianity as their religion should also be made eligible for these facilities.

I would also like to draw the attention of the hon'ble Minister towards the poor conditions of *Dhobis* and fishermen, particularly in my State. In some States they have been given SC and ST status, respectively, and in other States they have not been given this status. These people live in very poor conditions in my State. They both belong to backward classes. The Government of Andhra Pradesh, after passing a unanimous resolution, requested the Central Government for inclusion of *Dhobis* in the Scheduled Caste community and fishermen in the Scheduled Tribes community.

Lastly, political reservation is a must for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. In the Rajya Sabha and in the Legislative Councils, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are not getting any political reservation, whereas in my State, my leader, Shri N.T. Rama Rao, without any Central legislation, has given political reservation beyond the constitutional reservation to all other communities also in the local bodies. I request the Central Government to give some political reservation for them also and then only can society function smoothly.

SUBMISSIONS

Financial Assistance from PM's Relief Fund²⁷

In Gogulanka village of Polavaram Mandal of my constituency, that is Amalapuram of East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, on 13 July 1991, there was a tragic boat accident in which 13 people lost their lives. The incident took place while they were going to their work. They were all poor people, Scheduled Castes and agriculturists. I request the hon'ble Prime Minister to provide some kind of financial assistance to the poor people from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

Development of Konaseema Area²⁸

The Konaseema area, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh is like an island surrounded by river Godavari and canals, and is rich in its agricultural produce like rice and coconut. This area is not industrially developed. There is scope for locating agro-based, small and medium industries by using the available natural gas as power.

Konaseema area is protected by 272 kms. of flood banks which were raised about 100 years back during Sir Arthur Cotton's time and have become weak now. The recurring floods are causing loss of crores of rupees worth agricultural produce besides loss of human life every year. A small breach in any of the flood banks will submerge the whole area in the Bay of Bengal.

To help this area earn foreign exchange, the coastal area can be developed as a tourist resort which will attract tourists and also help fishermen to transport their catch to different parts.

It is requested that steps be taken to help locate agro-based small and medium industries, strengthen and widen the existing flood banks to avert floods and thus save the people of this area from recurring losses and release funds for coastal development and for the development of the area.

Involvement of Members of Parliament by State Governments in the Centrally Sponsored Schemes²⁹

In Centrally sponsored schemes like Rural-Urban Housing, D.R.D.A., C.I.T.D.A. etc., the State Governments are not involving the members of Parliament but are involving only MLAs and that also on political lines.

²⁷L.S. Deb., 30 July 1991

²⁸L.S. Deb., 10 September 1991

²⁹L.S. Deb., 27 February 1992

I request the Central Government to direct the State Governments for involving members of Parliament of respective areas in such Centrally sponsored schemes.

Need to Recognise Fishermen and Washermen of Andhra Pradesh as Scheduled Tribes³⁰

In my constituency, nearly two lakh fishermen face social and economic problems in their daily life. Even after Independence, this community has not been provided with the basic requirements like drinking water, roads, hospitals, education to children and a small *pucca* house, even though the Government earns crores of rupees of foreign exchange due to their efforts. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has recommended that the fishermen and washermen communities be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes. The matter was represented by several members of Parliament. So far, the Government has not taken any initiative in the matter.

Hence, I urge the Central Government to take immediate and necessary steps for inclusion of these categories in the list of Scheduled Tribes.

Restoration of Kakinada-Kotipalli Railway Line³¹

The Kakinada-Kotipalli railway line was abandoned during World War II. All lines except this railway line were restored in the country. A survey by spending about Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 lakh was conducted by railway authorities to find out the feasibility of restoring the Kakinada-Kotipalli railway line. I understand that the survey team strongly recommended the restoration of this line since it will facilitate not only transportation of agricultural products like paddy, coconut, etc. to different parts of the country but also make it convenient for the population of this area which is about 50 lakhs to reach the mainland easily. The people of this area have to depend mainly on road transportation at present. Further, I understand that the revenue collection expected by restoring this railway line by way of freight and passenger fare will be much higher than any other such lines in the country. The survey team further recommended in its report the extension of the railway line from Kakinada to Narsapur in West Godavari District. I request the hon'ble Railway Minister to take up the matter immediately.

³⁰L.S. Deb., 9 April 1992

³¹L.S. Deb., 6 August 1992

Gas-Based 375 MW Power Project at Amalapuram³²

The Government of Andhra Pradesh sent its proposal for clearance by Central Government for setting up a gas-based 375 MW power project at Amalapuram, East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, and requested the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to release 1.5 MCMD gas. The Government of Andhra Pradesh repeatedly requested the Government of India to intervene for clearance of the Amalapuram project as well as four other projects in the region. Whereas the projects at Kakinada, Jegurupadu, Vijjeswaram and a giant Fertilizer Plant at Kakinada have been allocated gas, the Amalapuram project has been left out. The people of this area are very much agitated over the matter, particularly when the gas is being transported from this place to other projects. This project should be cleared at the earliest by the Central Electricity Authority.

I request the Central Government to supply the required gas to clear the gas-based 375 MW power project at Amalapuram, Andhra Pradesh.

ONGC may be directed to pay its share for construction of Bridge at Yanam and Yedurulanka³³

At present, people in the Konaseema area have to cross the Gowthami branch of the river Godavari by ferry service from Yedurulanka in Konaseema to Yanam in Pondicherry Union territory and then proceed by road to Kakinada. It is proposed to construct a high level bridge at this place to provide facilities to the people of Konaseema to transport their agricultural produce to the markets of Yanam and Kakinada and *vice versa*. It will facilitate the ONGC operations in the Krishna and Godavari basins, which are in full swing, for the movement of their vehicles and also supply of natural gas to other industrially developing centres. The cost of the bridge is estimated at Rs. 85 crore.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh had taken up the matter with the Government of India and the Pondicherry Government to share the cost of the bridge in equal ratio, *i.e.* 1:1:1 by the Pondicherry Government, the ONGC and the Government of Andhra Pradesh. The Pondicherry Government has agreed to pay its share; the Government of Andhra Pradesh has also agreed to pay its share.

³²L.S. Deb., 18 March 1993

³³L.S. Deb., 26 April 1993

I, therefore, request the Central Government to kindly issue necessary orders to ONGC to pay its share of the cost of construction of the bridge at Yanam and Yedurulanka.

Problems faced by Coconut Workers of Konaseema, Andhra Pradesh³⁴

The Konaseema area of East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh is the second largest coconut plantation area after Kerala. There are nearly 50,000 families of coconut workers residing in my parliamentary constituency of Amalapuram and there are nearly two lakh acres of coconut plantation. However, their average work is only about 12 days in any month for which they receive very meagre wages. During the lay off periods, they do not receive any income either from the contractors or from the Government. These workers are facing a lot of problems. They sometimes lose their lives when they fall from coconut trees or become physically handicapped.

I, therefore, urge the Central Government to take immediate action for the welfare of these workers and ensure that benefits under Provident Fund Scheme, risk allowance, *exgratia* medical benefits, ESI Scheme, insurance, etc. are provided to coconut workers.

Adequate funds for restoration of Kakinada-Kotipalli Railway Line³⁵

The restoration of Kakinada-Kotipalli railway line which was abandoned during World War II along with six other lines has become necessary. All the other lines except the Kakinada-Kotipalli line in Andhra Pradesh have been restored. The estimated cost of this 46 km. long line is Rs. 42 crore.

In the 1993-94 Railway Budget, the Railways had earmarked an amount of Rs. 2.60 lakh for an up-to-date survey of this line. The Survey Committee recommended the taking up of the above project as it was found financially viable. The recommendation for taking up of the project was with the rate of return of 14.81 per cent, which is a very good remuneration to the Railways.

In view of the gas reserves struck in the area of Narsapur and Razole, there are good prospects of gas-based industries coming up over there. The Kakinada port is also being developed as one of the major ports in the country. Gas-based thermal stations are going to be set up in this area. In view of the recent developments in the area and the setting up of major fertilizer plants like NFCL and GFCL, the restoration of the above railway line has become even more important. This area is exporting agricultural produce worth

³⁴L.S. Deb., 27 August 1993

³⁵L.S. Deb., 8 March 1994

Rs. 1500 crore to other places by road only. The people of the area have been demanding restoration of the above line for many years.

I, therefore, request the hon'ble Minister of Railways to allocate enough funds for the project and include it in the ensuing Railway Budget.

Funds for Rehabilitation of people affected by blow-out in oil-well at Pasarlapudi, Andhra Pradesh³⁶

Sir, the blow-out that took place at Pasarlapudi in Well No. 19 of the ONGC from 8 January 1995 to 10 March 1995 has caused severe damage to property in and around the area in East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh and also loss of more than Rs. 100 crore to the ONGC. More than 10,000 people have suffered due to the blow-out and 1,000 houses have been severely damaged and more than 10,000 people have been evacuated to safer places. More than 2,000 acres of paddy have been affected and 5,000 coconut trees damaged in the blow-out. Nearly 400 families took shelter in the relief camps set up at Amalapuram. In a radius of 10 kms. around the blow-out site, the farmers have lost their agricultural crops like coconut and paddy. The hon'ble Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas and ONGC officials also visited the site many times.

From the beginning of the drilling operations by the ONGC in the K.G. project of Amalapuram, the ONGC has been using the local roads and bridges for its heavy vehicular traffic, resulting in damage to roads and bridges in the area. The people of Amalapuram have been agitating against the ONGC to give some financial assistance for the construction of roads and bridges in the area. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has also requested the Government of India from time to time to release funds for the development of the Konaseema area of Amalapuram.

The ONGC is getting crores of rupees from the K.G. project area of Andhra Pradesh by way of crude oil and natural gas. Still there are rich petroleum reserves for exploration.

Hence, I request the hon'ble Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas to take necessary steps to help the people who have been affected in the blow-out and give compensation for the crops damaged and release funds for the construction of roads and bridges.

³⁶L.S. Deb., 19 May 1995



At the inaugural of the exhibition on 'Democratic and Parliamentary Heritage of India', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi



At the inaugural of the exhibition on 'Indo-African Cooperation' organised by the PMA, New Delhi



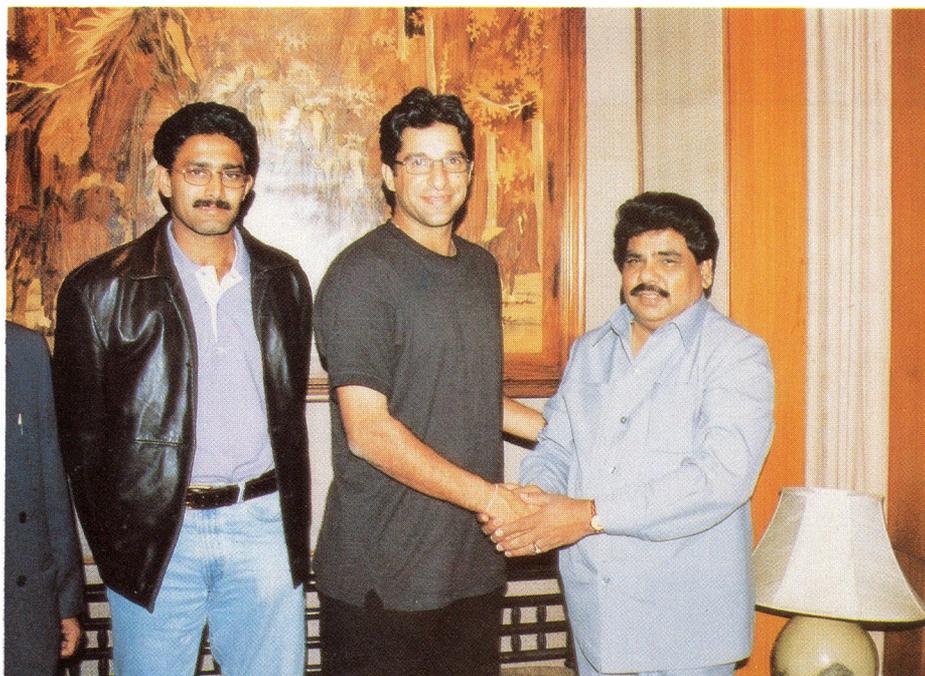
Offering prayers at the Lord Buddha Temple, Tokyo



Meeting the Telugu Press representatives, New Delhi



At the exhibition displaying the arms/ammunition seized by the Indian army, New Delhi



With the former Captain of the Pakistan cricket team, Wasim Akram and Indian cricketer, Anil Kumble

PART V

STINT IN THE ANDHRA PRADESH
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Nature's fury in Konaseema¹

Our area has been subjected to a great disaster. During the recent cyclone and floods, the entire coastal area has been devastated, both economically and socially. This is not an exaggeration. This is not just a cyclone. It is a hurricane. Winds blew with great speed and turned even the big trees upside down. Even the *pucca* houses were severely damaged. The scientists had identified it as hurricane. I suggest that it will be good if we pass a Resolution through this august House and appeal to all major institutions in the country, the Central Government and international organisations for urgent help. We saw many types of calamities earlier. If that area is to ever return to normalcy once again, we all should extend support and try to instil confidence in them. There is a necessity to explain the conditions of this area to all the countries in the world through a Resolution of this House. Hence I request this House to adopt such a Resolution.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister has provided timely assistance and tried his best to instil confidence in the minds of the people when the State was hit by cyclone recently. We need such persons and leaders who can respond to the realities without politicising issues whenever calamities occur. We are not in need of people who politicise issues. The Chief Minister has toured the area tirelessly. He even visited the villages and spoke to the affected people for hours together, enabling them to gain courage to face the challenges ahead. He camped in the district for a week. I request the leaders of all political parties to emulate the Hon'ble Chief Minister. Several national leaders, including the Hon'ble Prime Minister, had visited the affected area and expressed their sympathy. Several voluntary organisations had provided assistance to the affected people. As a representative of the people of that area, I express my sincere thanks to all of them.

¹Participating in a discussion on the cyclone that hit the Andhra coast (12 December 1996)

It has become a routine thing to speak about floods and cyclones whenever they take place. Instead of doing that, it will be good if we take up a permanent programme to overcome floods and cyclones. Otherwise, loss of life and property would continue to take place. It will be good if we take up programmes related to infrastructure development such as a network of roads and bridges, so that it would be easy to evacuate people to safer places whenever such calamities occur. We can save ourselves to a great extent if we take up programmes like plantation of trees and constructing houses which can withstand cyclones. We can save the people from calamities if the Government takes up a scientific programme and implements it in all earnestness.

Standing crops worth crores of rupees had been lost. Several coconut trees were damaged in the coastal area in general and in East Godavari district in particular. The farmers of this district are depending mainly on coconut crop. These farmers are also depending on paddy, banana, cashew and other commercial crops. These crops were also damaged severely. The farmers had lost everything and are looking eagerly for assistance from the Government, banks and other financial institutions. I request the Government to keep all these things in mind. I am very happy to say that the Hon'ble Chief Minister, his Cabinet colleagues and the State Government machinery had done excellent work in providing timely assistance to the affected people of that area. The entire population of that area is grateful to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Ministers, officials and voluntary organisations for providing timely assistance to them.

The responsibility of undertaking permanent steps to provide assistance also lies with the Government. The farmers are subjected to all types of losses. Coconut groves in lakhs of acres have been damaged very badly and the farmers had lost the coconut crop which provides them a regular monthly income. It is a great loss to the national income as well. The responsibility of undertaking long term measures to save people from the recurring natural calamities lies with the Government. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has come to the rescue of the people with liberal assistance. He ordered free distribution of rice to the affected families and even the rich and the well-to-do had availed this assistance for 2 to 3 days as they could not find any rice otherwise. Everything they had either got damaged or had been washed away. They gratefully acknowledge the timely assistance ordered by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, for they could get something to eat and survive through those horrible days. Lakhs of houses had been damaged because of the cyclone. The rich and the poor alike had suffered loss of property and belongings. Financial assistance of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 1200 besides the supply of free rice had been extended to all. These temporary measures which were implemented

under the direct supervision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister were welcomed by one and all. Now is the time to implement long term measures to save people from the recurring natural calamities. I once again request the Government to take urgent steps and lend a helping hand to all those farmers who have been affected during the recent cyclone.

Not only huts but also tiled houses collapsed due to the hurricane. Only those houses with RCC roof could withstand the fury to a certain extent. Surprisingly, people took shelter even in the latrines with RCC roof. Even the big, tiled houses collapsed. What I mean to say is that all the houses without strong roofs and proper construction were damaged. In Mummidivaram constituency alone, nearly 60,000 houses were damaged and people took shelter in the places where we had built small community halls at a cost of Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 2 lakh and also in the elementary school buildings. People rushed for shelter to places where there was a proper roof on that fateful night. Hence, I request that all the houses to be sanctioned by the Government should be constructed with proper roofs so that people can be safe even during times of cyclones and hurricanes. Therefore, I request the Government to construct *pucca* houses with RCC slabs and pillars and leave it to the beneficiaries to construct the interior walls. I request the Government to take steps to construct strong houses with slab roofs.

Loss of human life was also very high in the recent cyclone. 824 persons died in Amalapuram division. 554 persons died in Mummidivaram (in all the three *mandals*) alone. Similarly, 786 persons were missing in Amalapuram division. Nearly 318 persons were missing from Mummidivaram constituency. Sir, there is a reason for this. There are several fishermen villages in that area. They do not have even the basic facilities. There is an acute shortage of drinking water. Even minimum road facilities are not there to shift those stranded fishermen during the times of cyclone as there are small canals of the Godavari around those villages. It will be difficult to evacuate people from those villages during cyclones. Even the cyclone shelters constructed in those villages are not in proper condition. Hence the people are not in a position to take shelter in them. By providing proper roads, bridges and shelter facilities to those fishermen villages, we will be in a position to save them from calamities. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has visited every fishermen village, talked to them for several hours and understood their problems. Till now, no other Chief Minister had stayed camping for seven days in the district. But the present Chief Minister had stayed with the affected people, shared their grief and instilled confidence in them to face the challenging situation. Now, everyone is appreciating the programmes announced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister.

The drainage system in the area has been totally damaged. Tail ends are also damaged completely. School buildings, roads, road network and other infrastructure were damaged completely. The small and marginal farmers and artisans have suffered a huge loss. Therefore, there is a need for the State and Central Governments to come forward and provide liberal assistance to them. In this connection, I want to make a humble submission to the Government regarding the loss that has taken place there. Previously, the ONGC had paid compensation when coconut trees were damaged. The ONGC had provided compensation to the victims under the insurance scheme. Similarly, the Government should also extend its assistance. The activities of the ONGC are concentrated in the coastal districts, particularly in East and West Godavari districts. The Government is getting crores of rupees of income through cess and royalty from the ONGC. This amount should be kept separately and utilised for the development of infrastructure in this area. At the time of cyclones, this amount should be utilised for rescue and relief measures. Then only it is possible for this area to return to normalcy. I request the Government to keep in mind all that I said and extend all possible help to the victims of this unprecedented cyclone.

Relief and Rehabilitation of Cyclone Affected²

Previously, we had also served as members of Parliament. There, all the members, however senior they might be, strictly adhere to conventions. They will not interrupt whenever the Leader of the House or the Leader of the Opposition takes the floor. We learnt such good practices and conventions while in Parliament. But after coming over here, we are witnessing an altogether different atmosphere. I express my displeasure and pain over the things that are happening here.

Today, the Hon'ble Chief Minister is not just an individual but he is the embodiment of a great power (*Mahashakti*). During the recent cyclone he toured each and every village and announced several schemes in order to provide financial help to the cyclone victims. Those who are envious of the excellent work done by Hon'ble Chief Minister are disrupting the proceedings just for cheap popularity and for media coverage. People are aware of their intentions. It is true, as the members have pointed out earlier, that compensation had been paid when coconut trees were burnt during the blow out of the ONGC oil well. The ONGC had insured coconut trees of that area. Due to that, compensation had been paid for several hundreds of coconut trees.

²Participating in a discussion on relief and rehabilitation of the cyclone victims (13 December 1996).

The Hon'ble Chief Minister came forward very boldly and announced and implemented measures for the benefit of those who could not insure their trees in the cyclone affected districts of East and West Godavari. In this context, I want to submit one more thing for his kind consideration. During the recent cyclone, the Konaseema area has been subjected to several hardships. Nearly, 25 lakh people are residing there. As there were no proper approach roads, neither officials nor representatives of the people were able to reach the affected areas for extending timely help during the recent cyclone. It takes nearly 2 to 3 days to reach the affected area. The Hon'ble Chief Minister is also aware of the necessity of constructing bridges in that area. There is a proposal to seek World Bank loan for the Yanam-Yedurulanka bridge. The Hon'ble Chief Minister is also aware of it. Keeping this cyclone in view, it is necessary to pursue the World Bank for a loan for the construction of this bridge.

Atrocities on Dalits³

This incident was reported in newspapers on 4 February 1997. The next day, we proceeded to Venkatayapalem village and understood the situation through our discussion with the people there. The SP had gone to that village on the 4th. The next day, on 5th, I visited that village. We told them that the Government and the law will not let the culprits off, whoever they might be. A special police outpost has been set up in that village as it has been felt that there is no protection for Dalits there. A Dalit youth by name Nakka Nagesh and his wife have gone on fast unto death from 28 January in that district. After discussions, the State Government and the Hon'ble Chief Minister agreed to institute a judicial inquiry into the matter. It has also been agreed to provide *ex gratia* payment to the victims. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has also agreed to provide them employment. The SP and myself impressed upon the victims and made them give up their fast unto death agitation. It is far from true to say that we called them to our guest house and had lunch together as alleged by some friends. As pointed out by Shri Vanka Satyanarayana, the Government has taken every possible steps to bring the situation under control. The leaders of the Dalit Struggle Committee had been invited to meet the Hon'ble Chief Minister. The Chief Minister has given an assurance that incidents of this type would not recur and we cleared all their doubts.

³Participating in a discussion under Rule 304 of Rules of Procedure in A.P. Legislative Assembly (18 February 1997).

Nobody will support this type of incident and nobody would ever wish that such incident should happen. Except the CPI, leaders of no other political party had gone there. Why had the leaders of other parties not gone there to instil confidence in them? I urge the members who made allegations to do some introspection. By analysing the prevailing atmosphere and the social conditions, we should think about the matter as to how we can prevent such incidents. The incident that has taken place there is really unfortunate. We feel that such incidents should not take place again. I appeal to Hon'ble members, through you, Sir, not to make allegations without verifying the facts.

Dravidian University—A Revolutionary Concept⁴

With the establishment of the Dravidian University, a revolutionary concept becomes a reality. According to linguists, there are about 70 Dravidian languages, spoken by nearly 175 million people. Every fifth Indian speaks one or the other Dravidian languages. Our Constitution has recognised only 17 languages. There is an imperative for a deeper and extensive study of the contribution of South India, in order to comprehend Indian culture as a whole. The Dravidian tradition is second to none, be it in the matter of ancient literature or in the matter of culture. This university would, therefore, be of immense help in preserving the ancient Dravidian literature and culture, in upholding their values, in giving prominence to the history of Southern India and in carrying out a comprehensive study to bring to light the hitherto obscure aspects of the history of the South. There are cultural universities in our country. There are Hindi universities and a Urdu university is also being established. It is in this milieu the Dravidian university is being established for a comprehensive study and understanding of the 4 languages with the amalgamation of different cultures.

The objectives of the university are national integration; overall development of the human personality; to endeavour to make Dravidian language as spoken language; to impart training to those belonging to the Dravidian group of languages living in and outside India who wish to study literature, culture, modern science, medicine, engineering, technical education and other allied subjects; and to develop the Dravidian language as a medium of instruction. In this context, I would like to mention that the single-minded commitment and endeavour of the Hon'ble Chief Minister are mainly responsible for bringing in this Bill. Our Chief Minister has tenaciously given shape to this long forgotten great idea and offered it to us. Hence, all of us should put in concerted efforts for the establishment of this university, which has many distinct features. I request Hon'ble members to pass the Bill.

⁴Moving the Dravidian University Bill, 1996 in the House (27 February 1997)

Dravidian University—A Centre of Cultural Advancement⁵

At the very outset, I have informed Hon'ble members that this university is being established with lofty ideals. We wish to pass it unanimously with the cooperation of one and all. When a decision was taken to establish the Dravidian University in our State, all the other States happily came forward to support it without raising any objections. We have to pass the Bill unanimously, without dissent or difference of opinion. Then only the remaining formalities could be finalised. The Telugu Desam Party had initiated this proposal during 1987-88 for the first time. Thereafter, it was pursued by successive Chief Ministers, Shri N. Janardhana Reddy and Shri Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy and the then Union Ministers for Human Resource Development, Shri Arjun Singh and Shri Madhava Rao Scindia. But it is Shri Chandrababu Naidu who, with firm resolve to establish this university, has put in his untiring efforts and brought it to the present stage. The establishment of this university with such good and distinct features would be a matter of pride for all of us.

Everything in the Bill is presented briefly, that too in a simple language. Leave was sought for clarifications on some aspects. As for the clarification sought by Hon'ble Shri K. Subba Raju, I am to state that the Conference of Chief Ministers and the Conference of Human Resource Development Ministers were held at Delhi on 14 February 1994. Late Shri N.T. Rama Rao had paid utmost attention to the matter and worked whole-heartedly to establish the university. Our government has allocated Rs. 4 crore in the budget for this university, out of which an amount of Rs. 1.75 crore has already been released. 1094 acres of land has been acquired. Steps have been taken to renovate an old building situated on that land. Trees have been planted in the entire campus. Electrification and ground-water works have been completed. A project office has also been constructed there. All activities are in full swing. The Human Resource Development Ministry held a meeting at Delhi on 11th February. They have not released the amount of Rs. 4 crore earmarked in their budget as we did not pass the bill and send it to them. As this bill pertains to the establishment of a university, we have to obtain the assent of the President. They informed us that they will release their

⁵Replying to the discussion on the Dravidian University Bill, 1996 (27 February 1997)

share if we could prepare and send a copy of the bill to them. Speaking at the recently held Conference of Education Ministers, Shri S.R. Bommai, Minister for Human Resource Development, stated that the participation of different States in this manner is a new concept and assured a liberal allocation of funds in the budget. Two States have already sent in their contribution of Rs. 50 lakh and Rs. 25 lakh, to our State. The remaining two States also have promised to send in their share. The primary objective of this university is to carry out studies in the history and culture of the Southern States. It is quite wrong to equate it with the establishment of an Engineering College or a Medical College. The ultimate aim of this university is to enhance our knowledge extensively and to strengthen our national integration by comprehending the various aspects of literature, culture, science, medicine, engineering and technology in Dravidian culture. Many Non-Resident Indians are coming forward to establish this type of universities keeping in view such new concepts. They may also show their interest in this university. In future, this university will become the nodal point with the establishment of different departments and faculties to conduct studies on various aspects. A question about the medium of instruction has been raised. The languages of the four States will be the medium of instruction. For us it will be Telugu. For Kannadigas it will be Kannada. I would like to clarify that the University Grants Commission has not raised any objection regarding the name of the university. The post of Vice-Chancellor will be filled through a Search Committee as is being done in the case of other universities. The decision regarding admission will be taken after a comprehensive discussion in the statutory bodies. This university has got so many good and important features. This bill was introduced last September. It is already late. Till now it has not been passed. Hence, the release of funds from the Centre is being delayed. All the participating States in the university have come forward to bear the required expenditure. Even if they go back on their word, the funding will remain unaffected as the U.G.C. will anyway accord its recognition to this university.

Some members had asked about the role of legislators in the affairs of the proposed university. One of the provisions of the Statutory Act has already provided to nominate any person from public life. The same is being practised in respect of other universities also. Under these circumstances, I once again request the House through Hon'ble Deputy Speaker that this Bill be passed.

Higher Education—A Vital step in Nation-Building⁶

Hon'ble members have participated in the discussion on general and higher education. Today, there are 12,51,000 students pursuing higher education at the levels of intermediate, degree and university. Likewise, more than 40,000 teaching and non-teaching staff are employed in different departments. The Government is responsible for education upto secondary level. The Government's policy is to encourage institutions or persons when they take initiative to establish colleges at the degree level. Nearly 94 private junior colleges and 34 degree colleges were sanctioned last year, *i.e.* 1996-97. Many of the hon'ble members have asked about the vacancies of lecturer posts in colleges. There are nearly 1900 junior lecturer posts and 609 degree lecturer posts vacant at present. We are taking action to fill up these vacancies. We have regularised nearly 250 part-time junior lecturers through direct recruitment and through departmental promotion committees. We have notified 164 posts. As there are many cases pending at different levels in courts and tribunals, the recruitment is delayed. 270 junior college buildings were sanctioned at the cost of Rs. 27 crore and the amount has already been released. The construction work is going on. We have bifurcated 34 colleges last year. The aim of bifurcation is to improve the quality of education.

I am informing hon'ble members that we can achieve good results by providing basic facilities and filling up vacancies. Vocational courses in 511 junior colleges and 34 degree colleges have been started with the aim of introducing vocational, job-oriented and restructural courses as a part of the policy of the Government/Nearly 29 subjects are being taught under these vocational courses. We are going to start 1680 sections more and 996 sections are already working. Totally 32,480 students were enrolled in these courses and 11,908 students are already pursuing the courses. Job opportunities will increase with these courses. I am informing hon'ble members in this connection that it is the decision of the Government to introduce vocational courses at intermediate level and degree level in all colleges. And I also want to inform you that the Government policy is to bring financing institutions into higher education. We have already decided to introduce a new programme in our State. In order to boost the export of garments, the Government of India has

⁶During the debate on the Demands for Grants for Ministries/Departments for 1997-98 (20 March 1997).

decided to conduct a course under fashion technology programme. Visakhapatnam is one of the three centres selected by the Government of India. We want to bring many important changes in the examination system too. Introducing academic calendar, cut-off date for admissions, grading of the colleges, review committees on the performance of teachers and earn while-you-learn programme are some of the important concepts among them.

If we get complaints against any college about mass copying, we will cancel the affiliation of that college, take stringent action against them, and debar the students. Departing from the past, we will abolish the centre on the same day, if necessary. The Government will also take such important measures on transfers and grading of the colleges. Hon'ble members would also know that this Government has taken proper decisions and action on the issue of leakage of question papers of EMCET and other examinations. Hon'ble members have given certain suggestions on tuition fees. The tuition fees fixed 30 years back still continue. The fee has been enhanced from Rs. 100/- to Rs. 360/-. Even then a student of higher education is paying less than one rupee per day as fee. When we look at the figures of all India census or the census of our State, we find that only 6 per cent of the students go for higher education. I hope if one keeps this in mind, Hon'ble members will not have any objection about the present fee which is less than one rupee per day.

As regards the suggestion on locating colleges region-wise, we find that there are 322 degree colleges in the Telangana region, 199 in Rayalaseema and 309 in the coastal region. Besides, there are 816 junior colleges in Telangana, 302 in Rayalaseema and 700 in Andhra region. There are 337 colleges in the twin cities. Many Hon'ble members have suggested to locate a college at every mandal headquarters and constituency headquarters. This Government has already sanctioned 11 junior colleges. 17 Government colleges have been set up in backward areas. I request Hon'ble members to appreciate it whole-heartedly. The Government policy is to set up Government colleges in backward areas. I appeal to hon'ble members to withdraw their cut motions.

Hon'ble members have suggested certain things regarding the Chief Minister's Empowerment of the Youth (CMEY) Programme. I want to inform Hon'ble members about this programme. This has been started in all districts with five groups, except in Hyderabad. This has been made applicable to all groups keeping in view the students who participated in *Janmabhoomi* and *shramadanam* recently. Hon'ble members have suggested many things. We will keep in mind all their suggestions. I request Hon'ble members to withdraw their cut motions related to CMEY and pass the demands.

Grace Marks in Intermediate Examination⁷

Students are participating in the *Janmabhoomi* programme voluntarily, with a feeling that this is a very good programme introduced by the Government. The pass percentage in examinations is more this year. More students have passed this year than last year. It is not true that students faced inconvenience due to the *Janmabhoomi* programme. Grace marks were never awarded for Intermediate students earlier. We are holding instant examination for 58,000 students this year. Keeping in view the interests of students, this examination will be held on 3 August. This is done for the students who failed in one subject. Hon'ble members have made many valuable suggestions. The Government would certainly look into them and take appropriate action.

Malpractices in Examinations—Bane of Our Educational System⁸

All of us have experienced this torture—leakage of question papers. The Intermediate Board, the Government, people's representatives, 7.50 lakh Intermediate students and their parents have suffered for two long months. Hon'ble Chief Minister, who was in Delhi at that time busy with national politics, was shocked on learning what had happened in the public examinations. He consulted legal experts and academicians and meritorious students who suffered mentally due to the leakage of question papers and examination malpractices. The examination system itself is in danger. Due to this, the academic schedule has also suffered. This Bill will help in curbing efficiently leakages and irregularities in public examinations. An ordinance had to be promulgated as the existing laws were not sufficient to cope with the present situation. Now, this Bill is to replace that ordinance and I hope that Hon'ble members would pass it whole-heartedly and unanimously.

⁷Intervention during Zero Hour on the question of grace marks to Intermediate Students (26 July 1997)

⁸During the discussion on the Andhra Pradesh Public Examinations (Prevention of Malpractices and Unfair Means) Bill, 1997 (28 July 1997)

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Dalits and Ambedkar

For Dalits, it is difficult to speak about Ambedkar without being overwhelmed by emotion. Such is their sense of gratitude to Babasaheb. Such was his supreme service to this community... Before him, there were a few leaders who led agitations for the cause of Dalits. But they lacked Ambedkar's western education, intellectual insight, clarity of thought and felicity of expression.

Education

A university is known for the faculty it harbours as also the students it trains. The intellectual atmosphere of the university reaches a high stage of maturity by an organic interaction between the teachers and students in an ambience of respect for the former and affection for the latter.

Media

Media is one of the important pillars on which the foundation of democracy is laid. It has a vital responsibility to strengthen the democratic processes. In fact, democracy is measured by the freedom of expression, of which freedom of the Press is a vital element. Conversely, a free Press is beholden to democracy for its existence.

India in the Third Millennium

In the next millennium, I am sure, India will emerge as one of the major powers and play a leading role in international affairs. We must use freedom given to us to take India into the twenty-first century as a strong and prosperous nation.

On himself

Whatever position I am assigned to, I am committed to the principle of doing an honest and efficient job without attracting unnecessary attention. The work one does must be felt by the people concerned than be read in newspaper columns by people unconcerned. This has been my philosophy.

