

# INTO THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

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## A SPEAKER'S PERSPECTIVES



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI**



## Human Rights

Human rights... are inalienable, indivisible... In practice... these rights do get alienated because of international conflicts; because of insurgencies, ethnic conflicts and social upheavals within nations; they get divided between haves and have-nots, men and women, adults and children. There is a big hiatus between what we profess and what we practice. We need to observe the Vienna spirit of consensus and cooperation in practising human rights.

## Gender Balance

In today's world, women are more often denied their human rights and fundamental freedoms... they stand deprived in terms of political participation, health, education, employment, wages, wealth and personal security. Though women constitute half of humanity... they account for three-fourths of world's poor and two-thirds of world's illiterate. (We need to implement) the Beijing Platform for Action... for establishing gender balance.

## Terrorism

...terrorism is a manifestation of threat to the personal security of the human being — whether such threat is between individuals or groups or communities or from the State itself or from other States/Countries.

Terrorism is a social disease. Democracy is its remedy.

## Education

Education removes ignorance. If ignorance is removed, archaic mind-sets are changed; and civility sets in for good. And, a civilised society remains a unified society as well.

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मन्यमव जयते

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI

1998

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*Price : Rs. 800/-*

**Published under Rule 382 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business  
in Lok Sabha (Ninth Edition), 1998 and printed by Jainco Art India, 13/10,  
W.E.A., Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005**

## PREFACE

This volume comprises a representative section of speeches delivered by the Speaker of the Eleventh Lok Sabha, Shri P.A. Sangma which gives expression to his considered views on topical issues of national and international significance. It is hoped the publication will be found useful by parliamentarians, political scientists, academics and all those interested in the contemporary history of our country.

New Delhi  
March, 1998

S. GOPALAN,  
*Secretary-General,  
Lok Sabha.*

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DRSC	—	Departmentally Related Standing Committee
EEC	—	European Economic Community
EPFO	—	Employees Provident Fund Organisation
ESI	—	Employees State Insurance
FICCI	—	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FDI	—	Foreign Direct Investment
FII	—	Foreign Institutional Investment
FPTP	—	First-Past-the-Post
GDP	—	Gross Domestic Product
HVP	—	Haryana Vikas Party
IAS	—	Indian Administrative Service
IFFCO	—	Indian Farmers' Fertilizers Cooperative Ltd.
IIBEA	—	Ireland-India Business and Economic Association
IMF	—	International Monetary Fund
INTUC	—	Indian National Trade Union Congress
IPU	—	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ITPO	—	India Trade Promotion Organisation
LARRDIS	—	Library and Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service (of Parliament of India)
LDF	—	Left Democratic Front
MDMK	—	Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
MIA	—	Multilateral Investment Agreement
MNF	—	Mizo National Front
MPBF	—	Maximum Permissible Banking Finance
NABARD	—	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NAFTA	—	North American Free Trade Agreement
NCERT	—	National Council for Educational Research and Training
NGO	—	Non-Governmental Organisation

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NORAD	—	Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation
OECD	—	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC	—	Public Accounts Committee
PIRC	—	Parliamentary Information and Reference Centre
RSP	—	Revolutionary Socialist Party
SAARC	—	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	—	South Asian Free Trade Area
SAPTA	—	South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement
SIDA	—	Swedish International Development Authority
SPIC MACAY	—	Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music Amongst Youth
SUPIW	—	Socially Useful Productive Work
TNV	—	Tripura National Volunteers
UDF	—	United Democratic Front
UNDP	—	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	—	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	—	United Nations Children's Fund
VDIS	—	Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme
WTO	—	World Trade Organisation

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**PART I**  
**PROFILE**

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## SHRI P.A. SANGMA—A LIFE-SKETCH

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Son of late Shri Dipchon Ch. Marak, Shri Purno Agitok Sangma was born on 1 September 1947 at Village Chapahati in the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya. He was educated at the Dalu High School, St. Anthony's College, Shillong and the Dibrugarh University. After his B.A. (Hons.), he did his Masters with International Relations as special subject and subsequently obtained a Degree in Law. Shri Sangma is married to Smt. Soradini K. Sangma. The Sangmas have two sons and two daughters. Reading, discussions and music are his favourite pastimes while he enjoys playing indoor games.

Shri Sangma, who has worked as a Lecturer (and taught Constitutional Law), Advocate and Journalist, started his political career as the General Secretary of the Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress in 1974; he also remained its Vice-President for some time. From 1975 to 1980, he was General Secretary of the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee.

Shri Sangma's association with the Parliament began in 1977 when he was elected to the Sixth Lok Sabha from the Tura constituency. In 1980, he became the Joint Secretary of the All India Congress Committee. The same year, he was returned to the Seventh Lok Sabha. He was inducted into the Union Cabinet by the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi and held the Office of the Deputy Minister in charge of Industry from November 1980 to January 1982. He was the Deputy Minister for Commerce from January 1982 to December 1984.

Shri Sangma was elected to the Eighth Lok Sabha in the General Elections of 1984. From January 1985 to March 1985, he was the Minister of State holding the charge of Commerce and Supply. Later, he was the Minister of State for Commerce from March 1985 to September 1985. From September 1985 to January 1986, he held the Office of the Minister of State for Home Affairs.

Shri Sangma took over as the Minister of State for Labour with Independent Charge in October 1986. In February 1988, he became the Chief Minister of Meghalaya and remained in Office till 1990. He was the Leader of the Opposition in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly during 1990-91.

In 1991, Shri Sangma was elected to the Tenth Lok Sabha and became the Minister of State for Coal with Independent Charge. In February 1992, he was given the additional responsibility of assisting the Prime Minister in the Ministry of Labour. He assumed the Independent Charge of the Ministry of Labour in January 1993. Shri Sangma was elevated to the Cabinet rank in February 1995 and held the charge of the Ministry of Labour.

Shri Sangma was the Leader of the Tripartite Indian Delegation to the International Labour Conference in Geneva six times. He was elected the Chairman of the Asia and Pacific Region for the International Labour Ministers' Conference, 1994-95. He was also elected the Chairman of the Labour Ministers' Conference of Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries, 1994-95.

In September 1995, Shri Sangma took over as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. He was returned to the Lok Sabha in the General Elections in 1996 and was unanimously elected the Speaker of the Eleventh Lok Sabha on 23 May 1996, with universal support cutting across all political parties. He was then the youngest and the first from the Opposition to hold the Office of Speaker.

As a parliamentarian, Shri Sangma, by virtue of his interest as well as Office, was active in several Committees. He was a member of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation, Committee on Communications and Committee on Government Assurances and Chairman of the Parliamentary Consultative Committees on Labour, Coal and Communication.

As Speaker, Shri Sangma guided the formation of a Standing Joint Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women, the constitution of a Joint Parliamentary Committee for considering the 81st Constitutional Amendment which sought to enhance the presence of women in the Parliament and created a Group of Parliamentarians to report on Ethics and Standards in Public Life.

As Speaker, he was also Chairman of the Indian Parliamentary Group (IPG), and Chairman, Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies. Shri Sangma led the Indian Parliamentary Delegation to the 42nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference in Kuala Lumpur in August 1996 to and the 43rd Conference in Mauritius in September 1997; and to the 96th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Conference in Beijing in September 1996 and the 98th Conference in Cairo in September 1997.

He also hosted and chaired the Inter-Parliamentary Specialised Conference of the IPU on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics" held in New Delhi in February 1997. Apart from these, he led Parliamentary Delegations to Australia, Bulgaria, Croatia, DPR Korea, Finland, Mongolia, Norway, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Thailand and United Kingdom.

Shri Sangma has been closely associated with various social organisations and educational institutions. He has been the Editor of a local daily, *Chandambeni Kalrang*. He has also edited two volumes of the book titled *India in ILO*.

Widely travelled in India and abroad, he has an abiding interest in social service. He has been connected with social organizations like the Red Cross and the Night School for indigent children in his constituency.

Shri Sangma received the *Michael John Roll of Honour* of the Tata Workers' Union for "distinguished contribution to the cause of Labour and to the Parliamentary System" in March 1997. He also received from the President of India in May 1997 the *Golden Jubilee Award of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)* for outstanding contribution to the cause of the working class.

Shri Sangma is a multi-faceted personality. His quest for decorum, freedom and dignity of the House has earned him the reputation of an outstanding Parliamentarian. What, however, made Sangma acceptable to political parties of all shades, was his ability as Presiding Officer to earn the confidence of members on both sides of the House. His abiding concern for the underprivileged and his tireless endeavours to eradicate poverty and remove socio-economic inequalities has endeared him to the masses. Indeed, he is a man of the masses with an international standing. It is the human side of Sangma which has brought him a large number of friends amongst the Media. His initiatives for convening a Special Session of the Parliament to set an agenda for the nation for the 21st century and the live telecast of its proceedings have been widely complimented in the country and abroad.

"People living there (North-East region) feel that they are not only far from Delhi, but are far from hearts also... I am sure, that your election will help in lessening this feeling".

*Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee*

"I have seen you in many capacities and perhaps more than anyone else. I have had the opportunity of appreciating your work in whatever capacity you have been working... As the Labour Minister of India, I very well know through what holes you were dragged sometimes. But, you came out unscathed and you proved to be one of the most successful Labour Ministers of India... I feel very happy that you are at the place where your talents will be required in great measure".

*Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao*

"In the region where you hail from, the Himalayas are called 'Sagar Matha'. Today, you are sitting on the 'Sagar Matha' (peak) of this House. Under your leadership, this nation will achieve great heights."

*Shri Sharad Yadav*

"...you, more than anyone else, will articulate the views and aspirations of the forgotten small India... we salute that small India, people belonging to small States... small tribes... who have very small voice... in honouring something which is small, we really honour all that is great in India".

*Shri P. Chidambaram*

"The country rejoices because your election as the Speaker reflects the unity and integrity of our country... the House rejoices, the country rejoices, the minorities also rejoice today...".

*Shri G.M. Banatwalla*

"Your journey from the job of a teacher to a separate Hill State Movement, then to the chair of the Chief Minister, then to the responsibility of the Union Minister and now to the chair of the Speaker is a remarkable one and a fantastic individual achievement".

*Dr. Jayanta Rongpi*

Felicitations by leaders on Shri Saagma's election as the Speaker of the Eleventh Lok Sabha.

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**PART II**  
**HIS IDEAS**

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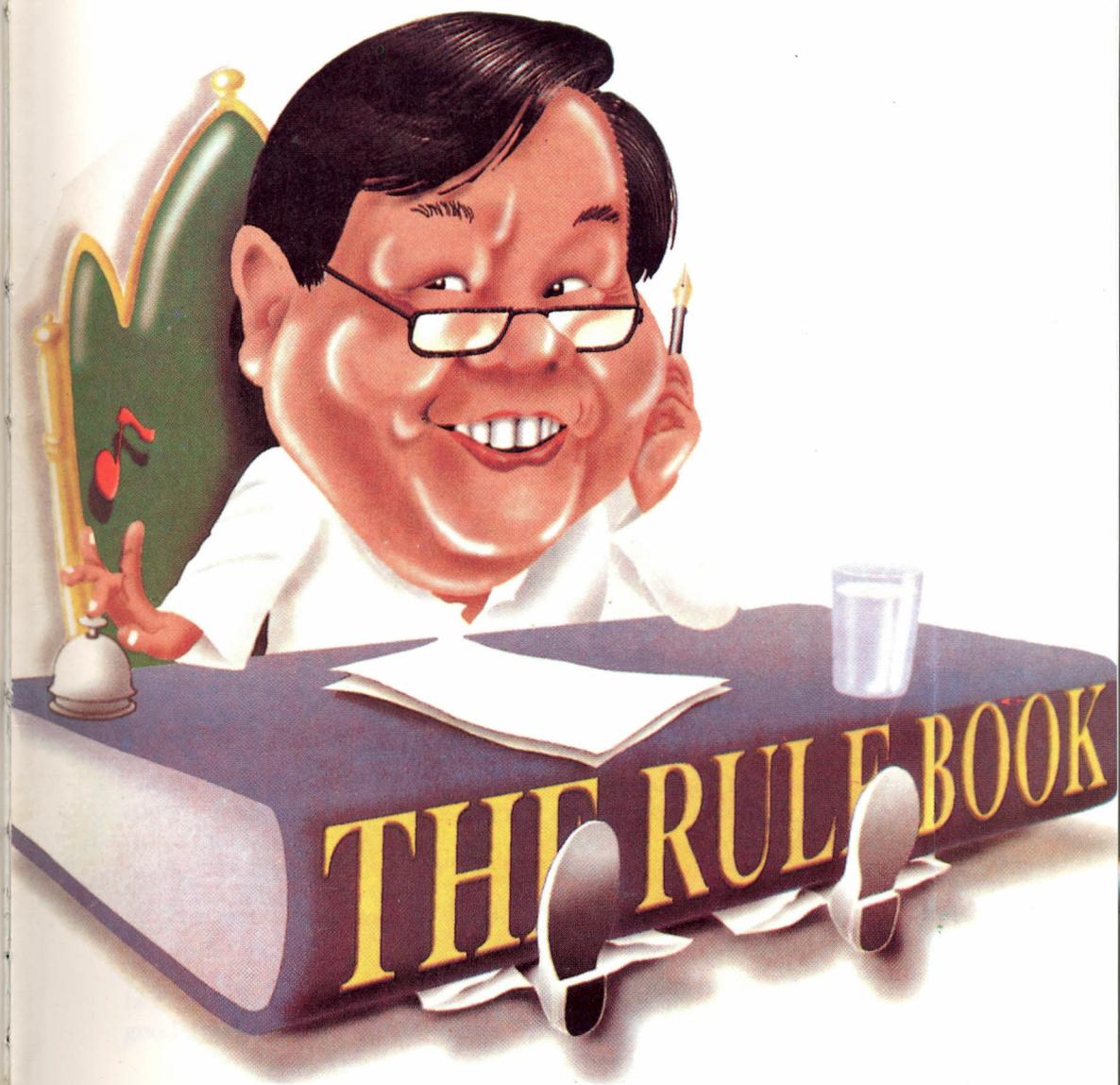
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# I

## PARLIAMENTARY AND CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

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## LOK SABHA—A HALLOWED HALL OF DEMOCRACY\*

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The people of our great country, who represent about twenty per cent of the humanity, have returned this Eleventh Lok Sabha through peaceful elections. The honourable members of the House have done me a unique honour by electing me as their Presiding Officer in an unprecedented gesture of unanimity, cutting across the entire political spectrum, regional and cultural differences and even power equations. I offer my salutations to all of you.

I am overwhelmed too by the generous sentiments expressed from all sections of the House.

Even as we are at the close of the present millennium, many countries of the world are still in the process of transition to democracy, often facing painful social and political convulsions. As we have assembled here, we have reaffirmed our commitment to democratic roots.

As I take this Chair, I pay my tributes to the great leaders of our nation, veterans like Vithalbhai Patel and Dada Saheb Mavalankar, who shaped the traditions of this House. And no doubt, I shall be drawing my inspiration from them.

The Lok Sabha is a hallowed hall of democracy. The ideal for all of us, therefore, should be to give it the sanctity of a place of worship. In the House, there should be debate and dissent with dignity, compromise with courtesy and respect without rancour.

The mandate as well as the basic term of reference for us in this House is legislation. It is through legislation that we reflect the will of the people, lay down the policies, and establish the rule of law. Time being the constraining factor, we should deploy the same to produce optimum results in terms of good governance.

We are people from the grassroots represented in all sections of the House. We have a feel for the pulse of the people. I am sure that we will enrich the proceedings of the House by bringing our collective wisdom and experience to bear on the dignity and quality of our debates.

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\*On his election as the Speaker of the Eleventh Lok Sabha, New Delhi, (23 May, 1996).

The verdict of the people as reflected in the composition of this House has given rise to aspirations as well as apprehensions against them. I am sure that all of us will collectively discharge our responsibility so as to fulfil their aspirations and allay their apprehensions.

I shall assure you in this context that while conducting the proceedings of this House, I shall endeavour my utmost to be guided by transparency and impartiality in my actions and provide equal opportunity to all in giving expression to their views.

Parliament business is serious but need not be tense. Tension would need to be tempered by a sense of wit and humour. We would have to draw inspiration from eminent parliamentarians of yesteryears with a sense of humour like Pandit Nehru, Pilloo Modi, Balraj Madhok, Mahabir Tyagi, Jagjivan Ram, et al. Humour spawns camaraderie and camaraderie enhances understanding.

The Secretariat of the Lok Sabha does play a crucial role, though behind the screen, in facilitating the smooth and orderly conduct of the proceedings of the House. I shall be drawing upon the experience and cooperation of the Secretariat too in the effective discharge of my duties.

The Media is the interface between the House and the people. I would seek their cooperation in objective presentation of the proceedings of the House to the people.

Honourable members, all of you have chosen to give the care of this House to my trust. On my part, I would assure you that I shall endeavour my best to rise up to this trust and meet your expectations.

Thank you.

## OUR CONSTITUTION—A PRICELESS HERITAGE\*

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This day, fifty years ago, was historic. Beginning was made in these premises for the establishment of the supreme law of our land, our Constitution. It is a matter of great pride, of honour for us to commemorate that beginning. Let me first of all pay homage, on this occasion, to all the departed members of the Constituent Assembly.

Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma, our Honourable President, by his own right, is a legal luminary, a constitutional expert and a renowned exponent of the Rule of Law. Sir, you symbolise everything that the framers of our Constitution visualized in the holder of our Presidency. You belong too, to the very generation of our special guests of the day, Members of the Constituent Assembly who are present here. It is a matter of happy historic coincidence that you would be honouring them. Sir, I have great pleasure in welcoming you.

Vice-President, Shri K.R. Narayanan, with his strong background in professional diplomacy and hailing as he does from the State of Kerala, the land of literacy, equity and social justice, has distinguished himself in the Office of Chairman, Rajya Sabha which has been vested with special dignity by the Constituent Assembly. His presence today with us is a matter of special encouragement to all of us. I extend a hearty welcome to him.

One of the public debates today concerns the future of parliamentary form of Government in our country. Opinions are being often voiced now that the Presidential form may, perhaps, be more suited for us. The framers of our Constitution did give serious thought to the matter. They opted for parliamentary form on the conviction that in our conditions, responsibility of the Executive should be given the paramount consideration. We have had successful examples of governance through coalition which has proved that responsible Governments can be stable as well. The task before Prime Minister, Shri H.D. Deve Gowda today is one of providing stability through responsibility. I welcome him to this function with great pleasure.

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\*At the Golden Jubilee of the First Sitting of the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, (9 December, 1996).

Smt. Najma Heptulla, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, not merely represents the aspirations of the women of India today; she has brought laurels to the Indian Parliament in her capacity as a dynamic member of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. My special welcome to her as well as to my able and worthy colleague Shri Suraj Bhan, Deputy Speaker, Lok Sabha.

The heritage handed to us by the Constituent Assembly is priceless. This heritage is of a secular, democratic, republican model, characterised by universal adult franchise, guarantee of Fundamental Rights, linguistic balance, equity and social justice, parliamentary form, independence of the Judiciary, and recognition of unity in diversity in which the federal principle is subsumed. All these features are enshrined in the historic "Objectives Resolution" moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and adopted by the Constituent Assembly. President Andrew Jackson of the United States observed about his country's Constitution: "perpetuity is stamped upon the Constitution by the blood of our fathers". This is true of our Constitution as well. It is with these feelings flowing from my guts that I welcome the eight members of the Constituent Assembly present here with us today. These members are Begum Aizaz Rasool and Sarvashri Nijalingappa, C. Subramaniam, Chowdhari Ranbir Singh, Motiram Baigra, Kusum Kant Jain, Balwant Singh Mehta and Bhagwan Din. Let us honour them with a hearty ovation.

There are other members of the Constituent Assembly who are not present here with us today — Smt. Renuka Ray, Smt. Malati Choudhury and Sarvashri R.B. Kumbhar, M.R. Masani, B. Gopala Reddy, L. Krishnaswami Bharati and M.A. Sreenivasan. Let us felicitate them in absentia.

I welcome all the members of Parliament, many of whom have, over the years, dedicated themselves to, and toiled for, the preservation of our Constitution and its underlying ideals. Let me welcome everyone to whom I have not made specific reference and is present here to honour the special guests.

Dr. Ambedkar stated in November 1949 and I quote: "If hereafter things go wrong, we will have nobody to blame except ourselves. There is great danger of things going wrong. Times are fast changing. People including our own are being moved by new ideologies. They are prepared to have Government for the People and are indifferent whether it is Government of the People and by the People. ...Let us not be tardy in the recognition of the evils which.....induce people to prefer Government for the People to Government by the People" (unquote).

I am confident that we will not fail Dr. Ambedkar.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Jai Hind.

## RAJYA SABHA—THE HOUSE OF ELDERS\*

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I am happy to be here at this function today.

It was Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States who said, I quote, "a plural Legislature is as necessary to good Government as a single Executive". Our Rajya Sabha has been playing its necessary role, rendering very significant service to our democratic system of governance.

Having adopted the British parliamentary system, including the bicameral parliamentary structure, one would naturally tend to draw comparisons between the House of Lords and the Rajya Sabha. Our Upper House has its very distinct characteristics.

While the Rajya Sabha plays the role of the Revising Chamber as the British House of Lords does, it is very different from the latter. Indeed, the House of Lords, because of its composition, is a subject of quite a lot of British humour and one has even described it as "good evidence of life after death". The Rajya Sabha, on the other hand, has always been and will continue to be lively and vibrant because of its composition and character.

The constitutional provision for the Vice-President being the *ex officio* Chairman of the Rajya Sabha at once elevates the status of the House. The presidency of the House has been held by great sons of India who have been leaders and intellectuals by their own right.

The Rajya Sabha may not be the ultimate Court as the House of Lords in U.K. is, but it has representative character. Being the Council of States, indirectly elected by the elected members of the State Legislative Assemblies, the Rajya Sabha symbolises the federal principle, apart from reflecting the voice of the people. The presence in the House of Presidential nominees in the areas of literature, science, art and social service provides a special depth and dimension to the stature of the House.

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\*On the occasion of the release of the book *Rajya Sabha at Work*, New Delhi, (27 February, 1997).

Not being subject to dissolution, the Rajya Sabha breathes political continuity into our democratic polity.

In my experience as Speaker of the Lok Sabha, I have come to realise that Rajya Sabha has developed its own special style of working in close partnership with the Lok Sabha, be it in the transaction of day-to-day parliamentary business or interface and interaction with parliamentarians elsewhere in the world, bilaterally and multilaterally. Having appeared in the Rajya Sabha earlier for over a decade in my capacity as Union Minister, may I say, I do miss the charm of the Rajya Sabha?

The history, evolution, character, style of functioning and procedures and rules of practice of this great House deserve to be codified for the benefit of not merely the legislators of our country, but of all democratic countries of the world. In the procedures and practices of the Rajya Sabha are subsumed all the parameters and, in fact, the very discipline that are required for the orderly conduct of business of the House. Their nuances are highly diversified and require minute attention, deep understanding and enlightened appreciation for the members to contribute meaningfully to parliamentary business.

I compliment Smt. Rama Devi, the versatile Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha and Shri Gujar, Consultant, Rajya Sabha Secretariat for their book *Rajya Sabha at Work* which I am sure is going to be appreciated all round as a very significant contribution to the Parliament of India.

I wish them all success in continued efforts at creative work of this nature.

Thank you one and all.

## DECOROUS AND ORDERLY TRANSACTION OF PARLIAMENTARY WORK\*

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I have great pleasure in welcoming all the Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India to this Conference.

The Standing Committee of the All India Presiding Officers Conference has enabled me to set out for this Conference an agenda of considerable significance in the present political context of our country. The Conference is to deliberate on orderly conduct of business of Legislatures vital for the growth of democracy, parliamentary surveillance of the Executive through the Committee System, relationship with the Press and electronic media coverage of the proceedings of the Legislatures.

We, the Presiding Officers of legislative bodies, are meeting at a time when politics is becoming kaleidoscopic, parties are becoming fragile, and governance is increasingly through coalitions. In this environment, Governments of the day get driven to the razor's edge, their legitimacy coming under frequent tests and the power of the Chair being temptingly invoked in the process. The Chair in the legislative bodies, whether occupied by the Speaker himself or by the Deputy Speaker or any other for the moment, is a highly sanctified institution. Its occupant would do well not to yield to undesirable temptations and should specially take care that the exercise of his authority does not disrupt the due processes of the Constitution and the Law.

In the statement I made in the Lok Sabha in response to felicitations on my election to the Chair, I observed that the House is a hallowed place where what should prevail is debate and dissent with dignity, compromise with courtesy and respect without rancour. The means to achieve this is the orderly conduct of business in the House.

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\*At the Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, New Delhi, (10 October, 1996).

The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Houses is not a book of empty rituals. It is a Code of Conduct for decorous and orderly transaction of business. Continuous conformity to it needs to be elegantly ensured by the Presiding Officers.

What is orderly conduct conducive to the growth of democracy? The matter should not be too literally construed. It does not refer merely to the demeanour of individual members in the House. It refers to the totality of conduct of members inside and outside the House; their collective self-regulation in time management in the House; conformity to parliamentary party discipline; adherence to decisions of the Business Advisory Committee; compliance with conventions; co-operation in decentralised style of functioning; respect for private members' business; and making good governance, in its broad sense, possible.

Articles 105 and 194 of the Constitution vest the Houses and the Legislatures with enormous powers, privileges and immunities. It is also the role of the Presiding Officers of the Houses to defend the liberties and privileges of the members. Particularly in view of this, the righteous conduct of the members outside the Houses assumes special significance. It is in this background that both the Houses of the U.S. Congress came to establish Ethics Committees in the early 70s in an attempt to force basic standards of probity on their members. No doubt, these Committees have not been an unqualified success. Nonetheless, it is worth examining whether in the Indian context we can form such Committees and make them work.

We, the Presiding Officers, do have a serious problem when it comes to time management in the Houses. In the Lok Sabha, for example, within a six-hour working schedule, the 545 members get 40 seconds of time per capita. Matters of urgent public importance which the representatives of our multitudinous population want to raise, and very legitimately at that, are incredibly large in number and often unquestionable in their gravity. Members, naturally, clamour for projection of their problems on the floor of the Houses taking recourse to all permissible modalities — Starred Questions, Zero Hour, Half-an-Hour Discussions, No-Day-Yet Named Motions, Short Duration Discussions, Calling Attention, Adjournment Motions, etc. The demand on, and supply of, time do not simply match. Members cannot be satisfied. This is the root cause of difficulties in securing orderly conduct of business in the Houses. Members who do catch the Speaker's eye, which has been described as "the most elusive organ that nature has ever yet created" end up indulging in tedious repetitions causing breaches of order, unparliamentary expressions and disorderly conduct; the Presiding Officer rises and is not heard in silence

as expected. The situation calls for enormous patience and understanding on the part of the Presiding Officers. They may have to draw on all their inner resources of conciliation and personally interact with the dissatisfied members in the lobbies every now and then.

In this context, the parliamentary parties have a significant role to play; the Presiding Officers will have to build up rapport with the party leaders to hold their rank and file on leash and bring home to them the inevitability of time management.

The Presiding Officers will have to learn the art of transacting business through consensus. The Business Advisory Committee is a device to build up consensus; it should be taken recourse to as frequently as needed. It is inherent in the role of the Opposition that it selectively attempts to delay transaction of business with implications for time management on the floor. And, it is inherent in the role of the Government too, to get its business through to the maximum extent feasible. The Presiding Officer has to secure a balance by application of his negotiating skills in the Business Advisory Committee meetings.

The Whips of the parties are essentially business managers in the Houses. The Presiding Officers will do well to take time off to liaise with them as well to facilitate smooth flow of business on the floor.

Often, stormy situations are created on the floor of the Houses for want of respect for conventions. For example, it is the convention that the members do not mention individuals who do not have the opportunity to defend themselves in the House. When this convention is breached, some members are likely to react strongly. Firm but elegant invitation to compliance with conventions would be needed in such circumstances.

The Parliament has come to establish an elaborate Committee System. There are 35 Committees at present. Some States have also established Subject Committees. Examples are Kerala, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal, etc. The merits of the Committee System are :

- On account of time constraint, the plenary of the Houses are not able to transact all business to the extent desired; individual Committees having as many as 45 members function as mini-Parliaments; in essence, the Committees facilitate decentralised functioning of the Parliament.
- Demands for Grants get mandatorily remitted to Committees for detailed scrutiny; even the Demands which would get guillotined in the House would have received detailed scrutiny in the hands of the Committees.

- Scrutinising Annual Reports of Ministries, as they do, implementation of the developmental programmes of the Ministries gets closely monitored, often repetitively.
- Budget scrutiny and monitoring of implementation of programmes facilitate accountability of the Executive to the Parliament being enhanced.
- Bills as may be referred by the Presiding Officer to the Committees get scrutinised in detail; this facilitates sober examination of legislative proposals in comparatively cooler environment; and members of the Committee are able to bring to bear on the laws their practical wisdom, flowing from their grassroots experience.
- The Committee System is comprehensively participative and democratic in the sense that every member functions on one Committee or the other.

Of course, there is a certain degree of overlapping between the functions of the Departmentally Related Committees and the traditional Finance Committees. Innovative operational styles will have to be evolved to eliminate overlapping of jurisdiction.

The Committee System, of course, is quite expensive; Committees do want to undertake field visits to make their reports and recommendations, correctional tools for concurrent removal of inadequacies in administration; may be, orderly transaction of business in the Committees could be made cost effective despite expenses. And the Committees, in effect, can become powerful budgetary, legislative and evaluating engine rooms.

*It should, however, be urged that the Committees do not become groups that keep minutes but lose hours. Indeed, time is the essence of the business of Legislatures.*

Orderly conduct of business in the Houses would suffer from a serious inadequacy if private members' business, whether in terms of Bills or Resolutions, is not taken seriously. Private members' business received considerable sanctity even during colonial days. We have had experience in the matter for nearly 9 decades. Flowing, as it does, from matters of general public interest, it is as important as any other business of the Legislatures, including Government business. The objective served through the mechanism of private members' business, in the least, is obtaining an expression of the opinion of the Legislatures. Members of the Legislatures on the Treasury side have to be particularly brought to treat private members' business as serious and not as ritualistic routine.

Article 361A of the Constitution gives constitutional validity and sanctity for the interface of the Media, including electronic Media, with the Legislatures. On the statutory side, the Parliament proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, 1977 has also been enacted. The Presiding Officers should keep this in mind and facilitate the Media to play an effective role as the intermediary between the Legislatures and the public. It is also common knowledge that several debates in the Parliament are influenced by what is projected by the Media. Meaningful systems of access for the Media to important areas of the Legislatures — Press Galleries, Central Hall, etc. — should be facilitated. I would even suggest that in the matter of interface with the Media, the traditional conservative approaches of the Legislatures would need to be relented.

Before I conclude, in order to bring home that in the transaction of business of the Legislatures, we should keep national integrity as the foremost concern in our democratic system, particularly in the present context, I would quote Edmund Burke, who told the electors of Bristol:

“Parliament is a deliberative Assembly of our nation. You choose a member indeed, but when you have chosen him, he is not the member for Bristol, but he is a Member of Parliament”.

Let this philosophy of Burke guide us in our actions.

Thank you and Jai Hind.

## LEGISLATORS, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT\*

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The people of Goa and their representatives are as enchanting as Goa itself is. I have always considered it a pleasurable experience to come here and mix with all of you amongst whom I have very many old friends.

I also consider it an honour that you have been pleased to invite me to this Legislators' Day Celebrations.

Compared to most of the State Legislatures, the Legislature of Goa is young. But Goa is rich with democratic traditions. My understanding is that having come out of colonial rule peculiar to Goa, the people here cherish democratic values in a very distinctive style. This style also stems from the very high level of literacy and the religious content of the Goanese culture. I am not too sure whether legislators in other parts of India have a unique Legislators' Day as you have. Reaching back to New Delhi, I think, I would write to all the Presiding Officers of State legislative bodies and recommend to them this Goanese model, if they do not already have Legislators' Days.

Legislators coming together on a day of celebration, of course, inculcates amongst them a sense of camaraderie cutting across political lines. This would also promote professional cohesiveness amongst the legislators, ultimately contributing to good governance. The legislators have a very significant role to play in the development of the State. Being representatives directly elected by the people, they have the most realistic grasp and perception of the aspirations of the common man. The business in the Legislature should be designed to fulfilling these aspirations. And, it is the realisation of this factor that would help in getting the Executive to be truly accountable to the Legislature. Mobilisation of resources, their productive deployment, wealth generation, equitable distribution of wealth through creation of employment opportunities for the common people and delivery of services to the people

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\*At the Legislators' Day celebrations organised by the Goa Legislative Assembly, Panaji, (9 January, 1997).

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through developmental programmes are all the basic functions of the Executive, accountability in respect of which is to be secured by a professionally operating Legislature.

What does this professionalism mean? How is it generated? First of all, the legislators would need to train themselves in the transaction of business of the Legislature. Having so trained themselves, they would need to conform to the lessons of their training.

Most importantly, they should themselves be excellent time managers. The scarcest commodity, particularly for a legislator, is time. The time available to them should not be wasted on trivialities, but deployed on meaningful and worthy debates on the burning issues of common man's concern. Further, respect should also be given to the concerns of the fellow legislators in using their own time effectively. Speaking at cross purposes, pre-empting expression of views by others, spiteful logrolling are all styles totally inconsistent with professional conduct in the Legislature. Legislators, to contribute to the richness of debates, and to give positive directions to the Government of the day, will have to become specialists on specific subjects — agriculture, industrialisation, science and technology, economy, public finance, social sector issues, etc.

We are passing through a phase in our democracy when political leaders have come under close public scrutiny. Politicians and legislators are but a cross section of the society. Like in every other section of the society, such as civil servants, doctors, engineers, lawyers and men of the Judiciary, we are also a mix of the good, bad and indifferent. But, being people's representatives, expectations from the legislators are pitched very high.

We have to rise up to these expectations. Otherwise, in our democratic system of governance, people who consider themselves aggrieved seek remedies in courts of law. This brings the legislators into an interface with the Judiciary. Certain powers, privileges and immunities are, of course, constitutionally guaranteed to the legislators. But, the legislators should have a clear insight into, and understanding of, the boundaries of these privileges. All over the world, the common people do not take very kindly to the law makers taking cover under the privileges.

In our country, while the Constitution provides for definition of privileges by law, such a definition has not so far been made in a comprehensive way. Therefore, there is also a judicial jurisdiction in interpreting what constitutes a privilege. The realisation of all these factors should inform the conduct and performance of the legislators.

Senior political leaders and parliamentarians have indeed taken stock of the current political situation in the country and I perceive a general consensus amongst them for projecting probity in public life. There have been suggestions that we should have Ethics Committees for legislators. We have already undertaken a study of the operation of such Committees in democratic countries like USA, UK and Australia. May be, the Goanese could themselves give us the lead in this area, noted as they are for special levels of enlightenment, going with their standards of education.

It is a matter of tragic truth that politics in the country has come to be dismally vitiated by factors of casteism and communalism, even as we are heading towards celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. We should terminate this trend before long. The only solution is for the legislators, as a professional class, to demonstrate statesmanship and concentrate on the business of development and on fundamental issues of relevance to our society of today and tomorrow — issues like economic growth, education, employment and poverty elimination. The legislators can and should give importance to public and Media relations. It is for want of a meaningful interface with the Media that legislators often do not get their due in terms of public image. Doing public service is indeed a very hard grind. It involves incessant travels, easy accessibility to the public, proactive reach out to the common man, readiness to work late into the nights. These aspects of the working of the legislators do not get projected adequately. What gets projected is only the negative side.

I have urged that the electronic Media in the country should present to the people programmes covering really absorbing and highly informed and enlightening debates in the Parliament. We do have film footages of excellent Parliament programmes, telecast live on a day-to-day basis. People all over the country most often miss out these telecasts. But, based on the pre-recorded footages, we should project the positive side of the service of the legislators as well.

I have also asked *Doordarshan* to look into the feasibility of implementing a phased programme for live telecast of programmes of State Legislatures. Further, I have written to the Presiding Officers of State Legislative Bodies on the matter. The legislators should see their own States and our country through the eyes of their counterparts in other States of the country as well as of those in other countries. There should be exchange of legislators between the States and with other countries. Of course, we have the Indian Parliamentary Group consisting of representatives from State Legislatures which meets periodically. Legislators from the States also attend meetings elsewhere in the world under

the aegis of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. These meetings are very vital in exposing the State legislators to healthy and innovative parliamentary practices in the country and the world.

For many years now, the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training has been conducting Orientation and Training Programmes for parliamentarians, State legislators and the staff of the legislative bodies. May be, Goa could even establish a Regional Centre for training of legislators.

I shall now conclude wishing all success for today's celebrations of the legislators of Goa and I hope that the performance of the legislators of the State in the coming years will make significant contributions to the strengthening of democracy in the country and of democratic values amongst our people.

Wish you all a Happy New Year.

Jai Hind.

## CHALLENGES BEFORE DEMOCRACY— ROLE OF LEGISLATIVE BODIES\*

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I am immensely pleased to cordially welcome you all in this beautiful and historic city of Shimla. I thank the Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Shri Virbhadra Singh, his Government and the Hon'ble Speaker, Shri Kaul Singh Thakur for hosting this Conference.

This Conference of the Presiding Officers is of special significance. This is the second major event for the legislative arm of governance in our country during this Golden Jubilee Year of our Independence, our democracy. The first one was the Special Session of the Parliament from the 26th of August to 1st September, 1997.

The agenda we have set for ourselves consists of two main subjects — our democratic experience and discipline and decorum in legislative bodies.

Our democracy is unique. It is the largest in the world. It has been successful. It has been uninterrupted over fifty long years. It has stood the test of the incredible pluralism of our society. It has co-existed with different shades of ideology from extreme right to extreme left through a multi-party system.

Our democracy, nonetheless, faces several challenges. We need to manage these challenges vigilantly to make a continued success of our democracy.

Our country is geographically too vast; demographically too large; socially too pluralistic. These factors by themselves constitute a powerful challenge. The only way to meet this challenge is by the decentralisation of governance. For the purpose, a legal framework for a three-tier decentralisation has been given through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. It is for us now to make it a reality on ground.

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\*At the Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, Shimla, (21 October, 1997).

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Our democracy can survive in the long run only by the strengthening of our federal structure. And, there can be cooperative federalism only by meaningful devolution of powers to the States. In fact, during the Special Session of the Parliament, inviting attention to the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations, several members of Parliament expressed serious concern about the lack of adequate devolution of powers to the States.

A clearly discernible trend in our multi-party system is the emergence of regional parties at the expense of national parties. Hung Legislatures are becoming increasingly common. Consequently, governance through coalitions becomes necessary. Coalitions, by themselves, need not cause concern, while ideally Governments of individual parties with adequate majority would be preferable. Indeed, in today's world, about 60 countries are run by coalition Governments. For the safety of our democracy, however, political parties need to develop consensus on basic socio-economic issues confronting the nation like population control, education, employment, infrastructure development, etc. Some of the most prosperous countries of today are those which have made socio-economic development neutral to party politics. Consequently, political instability does not necessarily have impact on development. We should also evolve modalities of strengthening our parliamentary democracy to ensure political stability, despite multiplicity of parties. Turning the emergence of even regional parties to advantage, we can get them to develop a national outlook.

Forty per cent of our people, nearly 400 million, live below the poverty line after fifty years of Independence. This level of poverty is the gravest danger for our democracy. So poverty elimination has to be high on our national agenda.

Unsustainable growth of population, beyond the carrying capacity of our country, is the root cause of our poverty and very many other economic problems. This is a complex issue having implications for food security, nutrition, health, education, employment, infrastructure needs and environment. The technology for control of population is, of course, available. Nor are resources for the purpose really a problem. The problem is really one of cultural attitudes. If the attitudes are changed, population is controlled; if population is controlled, poverty is eliminated making our polity safe for democracy. I call upon all the M.P.s, M.L.C.s and M.L.A.s in the country to launch a sustained campaign amongst the people in their constituencies for bringing about the required attitudinal change amongst them to accept the small family norm and thus contribute to population control.

Illiteracy is yet another challenge that we face. Illiteracy causes lack of skills which in turn causes unemployment and poverty, endangering democracy. The stock of illiterate people in our country is 460 million. Investment in education is the solution to the problem. Our national resolve is to set apart 6 per cent of national income for education. This should be duly reflected in our financial resource allocations, through Plan and Non-Plan budgets and through involvement of the private sector. I personally feel that we may even have to go for investment of more than 6 per cent of GDP in education. Education also needs to be made relevant to employment, as I have been urging in every given opportunity and in all fora.

The youth power of the country has to be mobilised for making it continuously safe for democracy. This can be done only by giving them hopes for securing their future. Otherwise, they are likely to become candidates for terrorism, drug running and other social evils.

There is a perceived sense of economic exploitation amongst sections of society within States. It is this sense which gives rise to local and regional demands for autonomy. This has to be addressed with great sensitivity and practical solutions found, lest local and regional aspirations deepen into fissiparous tendencies and endanger our democracy.

Market has become the decisive factor all over the world, including East Asia, Central Asia and East Europe. Political systems have changed and ideologies are getting relegated to the back-seat. The challenge of the market is a challenge for democracy too in all countries, including India, which have been accustomed to highly regulated economies. Deregulation poses serious problems of transition. Economic transition does involve present sacrifices for future welfare. Present sacrifices have social costs. As industries and capital and financial markets get opened up for investors from economically powerful countries in the process of transition, forces tending to destabilise the economy — as reflected in the present South-East Asian crisis — could come into operation. The pain of current sacrifices during economic transition has to be mitigated. The social costs have to be equitably borne. Trends of economic destabilisation have to be checkmated and prevented. In short, the whole process of economic transition — inevitable as it is in the present day world — has to be prudently managed. Otherwise what is likely to get destabilised ultimately is democracy itself.

Probity and standards in public life have become a matter of universal concern in several countries. This is true of our country as well. We are going to have a full day's Symposium on issues relating to constitution of Ethics Committees. I shall deal with this matter in some detail on the day of the Symposium.

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Our legends and epics have given a very high place for women in our society. Many women of India have made history. Indira Gandhi was not merely a Prime Minister of our country, but her memory is cherished all over the world long after her demise. We have had eminent women Chief Ministers, apart from Judges and other professionals. But we continue to be a male dominated society. The contribution of women to national economy does not even feature in our National Income Accounts. They have to be given their due place in decision-making positions, including at the political level. This, indeed, is the significance of the 81st Constitutional Amendment. We need to achieve true partnership between men and women in politics. Otherwise, we would suffer from democratic deficit. The modalities of securing women's partnership in politics are a matter of detail. Be that as it may, we should achieve this partnership. Constitutional and legal framework for this needs to be established earlier than later. And, more importantly, practices should be brought in conformity with whatever constitutional and legal framework we may get to establish.

Legislative bodies can and should play an effective role in addressing all these issues I have referred to. After all, it is their mandate to secure accountability of the Executive in evolving appropriate policies for the purpose and implementing them. The Parliament does play a very vibrant role in this regard through fairly lengthy Sessions lasting for substantial part of the year and through the elaborate Committee System that has been established. My impression is that State legislative bodies meet for comparatively lesser number of days in a year. The scope for bringing about improvement in this respect needs to be gone into.

We do in the normal course of House business discuss national issues in legislative bodies. But such discussions take place in a rather fragmented way and discontinuously, thanks to the pressure on the time from several standard items of business. It is because of this that the Special Golden Jubilee Session of the Parliament was organised to exclusively discuss basic national issues. I would urge that in the course of the Golden Jubilee year all State Legislatures too may hold such exclusive Sessions. They may also endeavour to adopt the unanimous Resolution adopted by the Parliament of India.

All of us are immensely aware of the discipline and decorum we maintain and the orderly conduct of business that we facilitate when we meet in the Conferences of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Why not we ensure these standards in our legislative bodies? In most Parliaments of the world, members appreciate the value of the House-time and respect each others' time. They avoid cross talk, interruptions, repetitions and misconduct. Our legislators need to be guided and trained in this respect. Political parties

have the primary responsibility in this regard. I have urged them to organise training courses for their members. The Presiding Officers also may like to do so in their States.

Let us strengthen our democracy by addressing basic national issues; let us set our economic house in order and strengthen it; let our legislative bodies become power houses feeding energy to our Governments.

I have taken more than the usual time I like to take in important Conferences like this. Being our Conference of the Golden Jubilee Year and considering the gravity of the tasks before us, I anticipated your indulgence. Wish you fruitful discussions. Thank you for your attention. Let us give a big hand to our very hospitable hosts, the Chief Minister and the Government of Himachal Pradesh, Hon'ble Speaker, Shri Kaul Singh Thakur and all those involved in organisational work for this Conference.

## COMMITTEE SYSTEM—SECURING EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE LEGISLATURE\*

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It is indeed a matter of great pleasure for me to be here today and to associate myself with your training programme. It is encouraging to note that, of late, several initiatives are being taken in this part of the country to instil more meaning and content in the functioning of our democratic institutions. Only a few months back, the Legislatures of this region took the initiative to lay the foundation for an Institute of Parliamentary Studies and Training here. Last month, a similar Orientation Programme was organised in Mizoram for the members and Officers of the Legislative Assembly of that State with the involvement of the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training of the Lok Sabha. It gives me special satisfaction that the Bureau is reaching out to different parts of the country in sharing its experience and expertise with the Legislatures of our States.

Plenaries of legislative bodies being too large to secure full accountability of the Executive, a well-defined Committee System has come to be at the core of developed democratic polities everywhere, so much so that many modern Governments have come to be known as Governments by Committees. In the United States, for example, even as early as late 19th century, so great was the influence of Congressional Committees and their Chairmen in the governance of their country that Woodrow Wilson remarked in 1895, I quote: "I know not how better to describe our form of Government in a single phrase than calling it a Government by the Chairmen of the Standing Committees of Congress." (Unquote). The American scholars go to the extent of calling their Congressional Committees as 'Little Legislatures'. The position there is not any different today. That is why, in recent times, a former Speaker of the American House of Representatives advised freshers amongst Congressmen that whenever they passed a Committee Chairman in the House, they should bow from the waist by way of respectful greeting and added that he himself did so!

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\*At the inauguration of the Training Programme on Departmentally Related Standing Committees for the Officers of Assam Legislative Assembly, Guwahati, (18 February, 1998).

In our system of government also, the Parliamentary Committees play a very significant role. The new system of the Departmentally Related Standing Committees evolved out of the acknowledgment of the special role Committees could play in a democracy like ours. This system, first introduced in the Kerala Legislature in the early 1980s, has by now gained wider acceptability across the country. It is almost five years since we, at the Centre, introduced this system of Committees. From our experience so far, we are convinced that it has several virtues and benefits.

The biggest achievement of the new Committee System, as I see it, is that the Demands for Grants of almost all the Ministries are scrutinised by at least one Parliamentary Committee today. Previously, as many of us are aware, Parliament hardly had any time to scrutinise the budgets of even important Ministries and Departments and the instrument of guillotine had to be wielded often.

The Departmentally Related Committees of Parliament are so constituted that every member has the opportunity to function on one Committee or the other. This opportunity gives tremendous exposure to these members in respect of budget formulation, Government policies, schemes, their implementation, modalities of judging problems and shortfalls in conformity to policies and implementation of development programmes, etc. Such exposure is what prepares the members in terms of expertise to occupy decision-making positions in Government.

The service on Parliamentary Committees being of this nature, it raises enormous expectations amongst the members of Parliament from the staff of the Secretariat. If the staff members are to rise up to, and fulfil, these expectations, they should themselves develop expertise on all the aspects of governmental functioning I have just now mentioned. They should, in particular, develop expertise in formulating questionnaires to ask the right questions and to seek relevant information. They should also gather proficiency in objectively analysing the performance of the Departments with reference to budget papers, administration reports, performance budget documents, action taken reports, etc. The Secretariat officials, in order to enable them to service the Committees in all these respects, should be given special training in planning, budgeting, basic principles of project formulation and analysis, corporate management, etc. We have a very vast network of training institutions all over India in the public and private sector dealing with aspects relating to governance. The faculties of these training institutions should also be associated in the training of the Secretariat staff of legislative bodies.

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Having held the position of Minister in several Ministries in the Government of India and having had insight into the functioning of the Committees from the Executive side, I have often felt that sometimes Committees have tended to have a negative and even adversarial approach in scrutinising the performance of the Government. This is often due to inadequate appreciation of the decision-making processes of the Government. The multi-tier decision-making processes of governmental decision-making deserves a sympathetic understanding because they have implications in terms of time, cost and efficiency. Decisions of Government cannot be treated as those of proprietary concerns or even compared to them. The ultimate purpose of Parliamentary Committees is to facilitate improvement in the performance of Government. These factors and aspects should clearly inform the Secretariat staff so that their service helps the Committees to play a positive role.

Our experience with Committees varies from State to State. It also varies as between the State legislative bodies and the Parliament. The Secretariat staff would need to share experiences by interaction with their counterparts elsewhere.

Sharing experiences also means cost on travel. The Speaker may have to take special initiative in ensuring allocation of the minimum required funds for the purpose by the Government in annual budgets.

Yet another experience which I have had with the functioning of Parliamentary Committees is that, sometimes, Committees themselves complain of overlapping of jurisdiction. For example, there could be overlapping if the Committee on Public Undertakings examines the performance of a public undertaking while at the same time the concerned Departmentally Related Committee also examines its performance. It is needless for me to point out that overlapping jurisdiction, apart from being wasteful, places an avoidable strain on the concerned Departments and organisations which come under scrutiny. Proper rules of procedures and conventions have to be developed and established so that such overlapping jurisdiction is clearly avoided.

I congratulate Shri Ganesh Kutum for his special initiative in organising this training programme. I wish it all success. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the programme.

## PAC—THE WATCH-DOG COMMITTEE\*

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I have great pleasure in participating in this Conference of the Chairmen of Public Accounts Committees.

I should compliment Dr. Joshi for having taken the initiative in organising this Conference. In fact, he wanted a Conference of Chairmen of PACs in SAARC countries to follow this Conference. As some of the important SAARC countries had problems in participating in such a Conference around this time, it has not been possible to organise the same. In any case, we are in touch with the SAARC country Parliament Secretariats in our efforts to organising this Conference sometime in April, 1997.

Having been Union Minister holding different portfolios over the years, I have had the opportunity of knowing many senior civil servants in the Government of India who keep meeting me often. Some of them have had opportunities to appear as witnesses before the Public Accounts Committee currently headed by Dr. Joshi. The impression I have received from these civil servants is that Dr. Joshi is both a feared and admired person. Feared, on account of his absolute thoroughness; admired for his absolute fairness. It is this combination of thoroughness on issues and fairness in assessment of governmental actions which should be the hallmark of all Chairmen and members of Public Accounts Committees.

The Public Accounts Committee is perhaps the most crucial institutional mechanism for securing parliamentary control over the Executive. At the Central level, the institution of the Public Accounts Committee has completed 75 years.

The special feature of the Public Accounts Committee is that it has the support of the highly professionalised services of the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) and his establishment. The staff of the CAG at various levels go through some of the toughest in-house tests for securing elevations

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\*At the inauguration of the Eighth Conference of the Chairmen of Committees of Public Accounts of Parliament and State Legislatures, New Delhi, (15 March, 1997).

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at the various levels of their hierarchy. Their audit is based on documents maintained by the Government establishments in the ordinary course of business. The audit paras are prepared in a participative manner. Before the paras are finalised, the Departmental Heads are invariably asked to give their comments. In fact, it is in this respect that the PACs are also different from many other Committees of legislative bodies. Committees other than PACs do not have this kind of a specialised professional support in guiding their scrutiny of executive actions.

In terms of mandate, the Public Accounts Committees examine:

- whether funds exhibited in the Finance Accounts as having been spent were legally available for expenditure;
- whether the expenditure was duly authorised by competent authority and conforms to the authorisation;
- whether reappropriations are consistent with the relevant provisions made by the competent authority.

Over the years, administration has undergone a sea-change. The Welfare State model having been adopted by our system of governance, developmental administration which is highly complex has come to be the principal role of the Government. A wide range of subjects have consequently become matters of immediate interest to the PACs — subjects relating to State Corporations, trading and manufacturing schemes, developmental projects, etc.

At the Central and State levels, a large number of autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies of a specialised nature fully or predominantly funded by the Government has also come to be established so that such bodies are able to implement programmes without being hamstrung by governmental routine. Wherever such bodies come under the audit of the CAG, their accounts also come under the purview of Public Accounts Committees.

I understand that since the year 1950, the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament has presented more than 1000 reports. It is our experience that these Reports have significantly contributed to ever-increasing demand for propriety in Government's financial transactions. Very many improprieties have also come to be projected before the Parliament and the public. The special role of the Public Accounts Committees has also ultimately impacted on public perceptions about successive Governments, creating an overall environment of desirable public vigil. Today's public demand for transparency in governmental actions and probity in public life are, to my mind, in no small measure due to vibrant and active Public Accounts Committees.

Having been exposed to the preparation of audit reports by the establishment of the CAG and subsequent scrutiny by Public Accounts Committee, while being within Ministries, I have the perspective of the Executive as well which, I think, I should share with you now. Government functionaries do have to conform to a fairly rigid regime of rules and regulations. Decision-making is a multi-point process. Expenditure proposals go through different hands up the hierarchy. The problems of procedures, processes and personalities cause, very often, inordinate delays. Funds voted are not spent. Serious shortfalls in expenditure occur. Because of delays, there are also inevitable cost over-runs. In certain inevitable circumstances, expenditure incurred is also in excess of authorisation. Those who are incharge of audit, whose reports go before the Public Accounts Committees, should have an empathetic understanding of the disabilities of the decision-makers behind the hard core of the regime of rules and regulations. If this understanding is missing, we may not be fair to the Executive. It is my experience that decision-makers who are just inactive and who are sticklers to the mere letter of the rules and regulations, are faulted less often. Those who are innovative and dynamic and try to achieve and show results, taking decisions in good faith, are faulted more often. I shall give an example:

In implementing a distress relief programme for fisherwomen in a particular State, a decision was taken to allow expenditure on purchase of a bus to be given to a fisheries co-operative. Audit took objection on the ground that this expenditure would provide relief in terms of employment only to three or four persons — the driver and cleaners. The decision-maker had to present almost a battle in defence of the decision explaining that the fisherwomen could go to their market places for sale of their goods more often and faster and in larger numbers so that they could get real value for their fishery items on sale. Decisions taken in the Executive, in the ordinary course of business, should not be too technically viewed. It is desirable that *bona fide* and rational decisions taken by meaningful and constructive interpretation of rules and regulations are not questioned in audit.

Public Accounts Committees, by the very nature of their functioning, scrutinise expenditure after they are incurred. Therefore, they always have the benefit of hindsight. And, foresight of the decision-makers can never be as accurate as hindsight. This realisation should also inform the Public Accounts Committees.

Members of the establishment of the CAG, in essence, are professionals like doctors and lawyers. Even as clients of doctors and lawyers take them in trust and expose themselves fully, the Executive exposes itself to the trust of the CAG's establishment during Audit. Because of this, it is desirable that

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every care is taken to see that Audit Reports do not get to be known to the public until they are laid before the legislative bodies and come under the scrutiny of the Public Accounts Committees. This will help in preventing avoidable politicisation of Audit Reports.

Reports of action taken by the Government on the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committees are as important as the original recommendations of the Committees. Such action taken reports are the only means of monitoring implementation of recommendations without which accountability of the Executive to the Legislature cannot be secured in the real and lasting sense.

I am sure that under the enlightened guidance of Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi and of Shri Shunglu, whom I have personally known as an outstanding civilian, this Conference would facilitate very fruitful exchange of experiences across the country and shall also pave the way for the success of the forthcoming Conference of SAARC Public Accounts Committees.

With these words, I am immensely pleased to inaugurate this Conference.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## PAC—ENFORCING PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OVER FINANCE\*

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Many of you may be wondering what has the Speaker of the House of the People of India got to do with this distinguished gathering of the Public Accounts specialists from SAARC countries. I can only attribute it to Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi who, though an intellectual and scientist by his own right, is not without his cruel sense of humour. Though I am no financial expert or Public Accounts specialist, he has insisted on my presence here. I tried to quote my preoccupation with the on-going Golden Jubilee Session of the Parliament. But I could not resist the affectionate persuasion of Dr. Joshi. Of course, I do feel honoured to be amidst you. The best I could do is to share a few of my ring-side experiences in finance and accounts acquired in my earlier roles as the Union Minister in Government of India and the Chief Minister of my State, Meghalaya.

All over the world today, in political life, ensuring accountability seems to be the priority. Preparation of budgets on financially sound principles and authorisation of resource mobilisation and appropriation of funds for public expenditure through legislative processes are common features of all democratic societies. When these processes are gone through, people do expect those in positions of power to be accountable for acting on the budgets. This accountability also is secured by the Parliament itself with authority vested in them by the Constitution. Public Accounts Committees are the mechanisms through which this accountability is sought to be ensured. Usually these Committees are professionally advised and supported by the institution of the Comptroller and Auditor-General enjoying constitutional status.

Parliamentary control over finance is basically anchored in the budget documents presented to the Parliament — that is, the Annual Financial Statement of estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government. The items of expenditure are broadly categorised as “voted” and “charged”. The

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\*At the Conference of the Chairmen and members of the Public Accounts Committees in SAARC Parliaments, New Delhi, (30 August, 1997).

charged items of expenditure like, for example, the emoluments and allowances of the President, Vice-President, the Speaker, judges of the Supreme Court, Comptroller and Auditor-General of India, apart from certain other items, do not come under detailed scrutiny in the Parliament, they being charged to the Consolidated Fund. The Parliament can also legislate on other items to be so charged. Often, of late, concern is being expressed about expansion of charged items.

Preparation of the budget itself is largely a bureaucratic exercise, though extensive consultations do take place with various interests — industrialists, farmers' groups, trade unions, social scientists, economists, etc. Once the budget is presented in Parliament, its scrutiny gets involved in a lot of technical parameters. Cut motions on the basis of which the budget could be criticised are symbolic in nature. On a cut motion in regard to a demand for agriculture, for example, there could be long winded statements and speeches about floods and droughts. The Parliament debate ultimately does not bring about any significant change as such on the size of the budget. Of course, we do have mandatory scrutiny of the budget by the Departmentally Related Committees. The Committee reports again do not immediately impact on the size of the budget though they may have implications for the future budget exercises in terms of allocation of resources or implementation of programmes.

The budget documents also tend, in certain circumstances, to reflect a vast gap between people's aspirations for development and ability to raise resources. The Planning Commission, while preparing the Five Year or Annual Plans, is confronted with disproportionately huge demands from the Ministries and State Governments, though broad indications are given with reference to expected resources about the desirable size of the Plans. The ultimate consequence is that the budget documents are full of token provisions for several activities which may or may not be enhanced midway through the processes of implementation of programmes. New programmes and activities are also taken up midway through financial years without having been planned out earlier at the time of budget preparation. The cumulative effect of budget practices of this nature is that resources get thinly spread. They also get sub-optimally provided. Many projects get implemented at a snail's pace over many years resulting in cost escalations, wastages and non-provision of adequate funds for the cost-effective implementation of a limited number of prioritised programmes.

Public spending has been described humorously as "the most delicious of all privileges: spending other people's money." The same prudence which is exercised in private life to avoid expenditure on avoidable activities is not exercised in the dispensation of public monies. Activities once undertaken become self-perpetuating and interminable.

As those involved in public expenditure scrutiny, you may be aware of the concept of zero-based budgeting. It was Jimmy Carter of the United States, as Governor of Georgia and a Presidential candidate, who pioneered it. The concept is simply that every government programme has to be justified afresh for each financial year.

Our financial experts and budget specialists are never inadequate in acquiring modern tools in management. Some years back, when I was a Union Minister, I remember that Jimmy Carter's zero-based budgeting became a *mantra* chanted with professional perfection and wisdom in the corridors of all Ministries, the lead of course having come from the North Block where resources are to be found and from the Planning Commission where the resources are allocated. Dictats were given to all Ministries to analyse every activity to judge on the relevance of its continuance. And, laborious exercises were indeed carried out. I am not aware of any activity having been discontinued. What continues is the concept of zero-based budgeting in the text books on public finance in schools of management.

Many economies go out of gear because of failures in balancing the budget. How is the budget balancing exercise done? Resources, whether they be of tax or non-tax origin, have to be raised as planned and expenditure contained therein. This does not often happen because neither resources are actually raised as planned nor expenditure contained within limits. Often, mobilised resources are also not deployed efficiently. This is even worse than failure to mobilise the planned resources because inefficient use of resources cuts into even existing resources. If a million rupees are invested in an enterprise the result of which is only earning of a loss, leave alone earning of any profit, the gap to the extent of the loss has to be filled by drawing on existing resources. In circumstances like this also, because Governments are not families, sophisticated tools of economic analysis are promptly pressed into service to justify failures. All of you would only be too familiar with the enigmatic tool of understanding called "cost benefit analysis". By handling, rather mishandling this tool, any economic or commercial loss could be proved to result in social benefit, that is, loss can be projected as an economic cost, justifying a social benefit.

We also have this interesting innovation called the Performance Budget. This is a document expected to be presented to the Parliament along with the Demands for Grants. I have always felt that this document is a misnomer. Though it is titled as Performance Budget, it often reads like a 'Doomsday Book' of non-performance. Usually it is authored by Financial Advisers who make it an uninspiring catalogue of shortfalls in achievement of physical targets. It was Shri C. Subramaniam who, as Union Finance Minister,

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introduced — of course, with the very good and laudable intension of speedy despatch of Government business — the system of the so called “integrated finance”. Under this system, the Financial Adviser has a dual responsibility, that is, to the Minister-in-charge of the concerned portfolio as well as the Finance Minister. For the Minister-in-charge of the portfolio other than Finance, working “integratedly” with the Financial Adviser is like sleeping with the enemy. Each shortfall in achievement of the physical targets, chronicled by the Financial Adviser, would carry behind it a story from which rich lessons could be learnt for streamlining public expenditure.

As a practitioner of public finance with very limited experience, I may suggest the following for consideration by this Conference:

- Go into the rationalisation of charged items of expenditure.
- Scrutinise the scope for prescribing limits on thin spread of resources, particularly because inefficient provision of resources may not even come within the scope of audit and even if it does, audit is *ex post facto* because of which responsibilities cannot be fixed in respect of defaults and inadequacies of earlier years.
- Examine modalities of effective and meaningful implementation of zero-based budgeting.
- Carefully scrutinise “cost benefit” justifications of the Executive.
- Streamline performance budgeting.

I am sure that this Conference will be a delightful experience for all of you under the guidance of Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi who is reputed for his scientific approach, thoroughness, objectivity and fairness.

Thank you for your kind attention.

## ETHICS COMMITTEE—A LANDMARK IN OUR PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM\*

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Let me first thank Honourable Shri Chavan for having invited me for this inauguration of the Ethics Committee of the Rajya Sabha.

'Ethics' by definition, is a very broad expression. It is a matter of morals; of character and conduct; of rules of behaviour; of accountability and propriety. It is not a legalistic and technical matter to be enforced. It is a matter of uprightness and integrity to be voluntarily observed.

The formation of Ethics Committee which is being inaugurated today hasn't come too soon.

Those engaged in "public life" are increasingly coming under fierce public scrutiny. In our country today, in fact, their credibility stands seriously dented. It is because of the public perception that they tend to place themselves above law, while they are to be participants in the enforcement of the Rule of Law.

What is the reason for this public perception? There has undoubtedly been an overall erosion of values. Our first generation leaders, by the very nature of their task, had to lead a life of sacrifice. Often, they had to cut short their education; give up professions; voluntarily embrace privation from families; suffer imprisonment in the hands of the foreign rulers; and even face violence.

The first generation leaders are in the nature of inheritors of a rich patrimony. Their credibility is not taken for granted by the public. It is judged by their capacity to deliver service with probity. The public, in the process, makes an inevitable comparison between the present day leaders and first generation leaders.

Governments all over the world have become very complex. Depending upon the degree of regulation of society and the economy, Governments

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\*At the inauguration of the Ethics Committee of the Rajya Sabha, New Delhi, (30 May, 1997).

have also come to wield varying degrees of authority, that is power. And, everybody is aware of the saying: "Power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely".

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting the British parliamentarians and discussing the Lord Nolan Committee Report on Standards in Public Life. This Committee also has studied the issue of ethics in the perspective of the complexity and changing environment in which modern Governments are placed.

Taking the Government off the backs of the people, shrinking of the Government by deregulation, it seems, is as important for ethics as for adjusting the economy to the competitive forces of the world.

In October 1996, the Presiding Officers of the Legislative Bodies in India went into the issue of ethics. They noted that the entire chain of accountability — of individuals in positions of power to the Executive, of the Executive to the Legislature and of the Legislature to the electorate — had come to be rather rudely disrupted. They ended up by appealing to the people themselves to vote for the right candidates.

It is political parties which organise the electorate. They need to introspect and their inevitable parameter for nomination of candidates for elections should be proven aptitude and performance in public life. As I mentioned in the Special Inter-Parliamentary Conference we hosted in February 1997, those elected to public offices without experience of service to public don't draw their strength from the grassroots and tend to take recourse to short-cuts for their continuance in such offices. We are going through a phase in which there is an unconscionable level of admixture of politics with casteism and communalism. This has very undesirable and seriously adverse impact on the manner in which public offices are held and power and authority are wielded.

Volumes are being written and, indeed, there is an on-going public debate on the nexus between the civil servants, the politicians, the business men and criminals. It is for the senior, enlightened leaders and the idealistic youth to come together in a veritable war against their nexus.

There is also the need for electoral reform. Elections are costly. Money has to come from somewhere. Political leaders get to be dependent on sources from where money comes. *Quid pro quo* is struck. This kills ethics.

Transparency in decision-making is an important factor to be ensured. Rules of procedure and processes of decision-making would need reform to ensure transparency.

Ethics Committees and Codes of Conduct have been tried out in other countries like USA, UK and Australia as well. Ground rules have been spelt out in terms of personal conduct, registration and declaration of "interests", disclosure of assets, etc.

Ethics Committees are not easy to operate either. When the Congressional Ethics Committees came into existence in USA in the 1970s, the saying about the Senate Committee went: I quote : "The Senate took to its new offspring with all the glee of a father who has found an illegitimate child dropped on his doorstep" (unquote). The House Committee again was described as "the worst kind of sham, giving the appearance of serving as a policeman while extending a marvellous protective shield over members of Congress."

Any institution is what we make of it. I am confident, we in our country have enough wisdom to introspect, identify our drawbacks, shed them and make our system work.

The formation of this Ethics Committee is, indeed, an important step as we proceed to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our Independence.

I wish it all success.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## HARMONIOUS RELATIONS AMONG THE ORGANS OF STATE\*

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The subject of today's Symposium is sensitive; but it is not new; it has had universal appeal, particularly in countries which have adopted the parliamentary system of Government based on nebulously balanced Separation of Powers; balance is always tricky and, therefore, becomes controversial.

Though the subject of today's Symposium is linked to the present context, the background for the Presiding Officers deciding to discuss it is not our preoccupation today with litigation involving personalities associated with public offices. In fact, as early as June 1993, the Conference of Presiding Officers constituted a Committee to report on harmonious relations between the Legislature and the Judiciary and incidental matters. Rather, today's effort is in the nature of a search for harmony.

In this context, a legitimate question could be raised; why search for harmony? The answer is simple; we do have problems inherent in our system. In our system, the separation of powers is *not total*. We have not based it on the U.S. model which is based on the principle spelt out by President John Adams. I quote "Judicial power ought to be distinct from both the Legislature and the Executive, and independent of both, so that it may be a check upon both, as both should be checks upon that". Ours is the British model. Under Article 79 of the Constitution, the Parliament consists as well of the President, in whom the executive power of the Union vests; likewise, under Article 168 of the Constitution, the Governor, in whom the executive power of the State vests, is part of the Legislature. The President is elected by an electoral college of elected members. The Prime Minister and the Ministers are drawn from, and are accountable to, the Legislature. The summoning, proroguing and dissolution of the Houses lie in the hands of the Executive. The President and the Governors do make laws by promulgating ordinances, though to be

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\*At the Symposium on "Relationship between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary and their Role in the Present-day Context" following the 60th Conference of the Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, New Delhi, (12 October, 1996).

subsequently replaced by laws enacted by the Legislature. The Executive also exercises subordinate legislative powers. The Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts in the States are appointed by the President. The Judiciary has been vested with powers of judicial reviews of Laws, of protecting the Fundamental Rights of the citizens and of maintaining balance between the Union and the States, between the States themselves and between the individual and the State. These powers can also be exercised without interference from the Legislature. The whole edifice has been carefully crafted and poised on a balance of fluid boundaries. When this balance is rocked, controversies arise and efforts are made by the polity as a whole to put the balance on even keel.

Over the last two days, the Presiding Officers of the Legislative Bodies in India have had extensive discussions on the issue of the challenge posed by the Executive to the basic mandate of the Houses they preside over—that is, securing accountability of the Executive. There is a universal feeling amongst the Presiding Officers that there is serious inadequacy of response on the part of the Executive on compliance of the norms of accountability. Issues of emergent public importance, it is felt, are not handled with promptitude and efficiency; that in responding to issues raised, there is an effort at skirting and evading them; that serious inadequacies are seen by the Legislatures in cost effective and transparent implementation of developmental programmes for which funds are voted and that sluggish and inefficient delivery of services to the masses is a matter of grave concern. Therefore, the Presiding Officers have underscored the need for establishing the Subject Related Committee System on a firm footing.

Yet another serious obstacle that has been identified is that in very many States, the periodicity of sittings of Legislatures and the duration of each of such sittings is appallingly inadequate with the result that the Legislatures are not even able to be in Session adequately, leave alone securing accountability of the Executive.

There is also a large body of public opinion according to which the interaction between the Legislatures and the civil servants has not been conducive to enforcing accountability of the Executive. Interference in day-to-day administration is a grievance most widely expressed in the corridors of governmental power. It is also a fact of life that very often, Legislatures, instead of concentrating on policy issues, are spending their time and energy in pursuit of the problems of individuals—matters like appointments, postings and transfers, promotions, particular types of decisions in individual cases, etc. The consequence is that Ministers who are essentially policy makers have only limited time for policy initiatives or reforms. This trend is likely to create unhealthy camaraderie between the legislators and the civil servants, the latter coming to abdicate their responsibility of discharging their duties without fear or favour.

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It is in this kind of interface between the Legislature and the Executive that the role of the Judiciary should be seen. There are, no doubt, established norms and conventions regarding the interface between the Legislature and the Judiciary. Under Articles 105 and 194, the Legislature and its members, have very clearly spelt out powers, privileges and immunities. Under Articles 122 and 212, validity of proceedings of the Houses cannot be called in question. Actions based on these powers, privileges and immunities cannot be questioned in courts of law.

There have, however, been certain instances of judicial interference in the procedure of business of the Houses in certain State Legislatures. Such instances do detract from cordial relationship between the Legislature and the Judiciary and should be scrupulously avoided, subject only to the latitude patent in constitutional provisions.

Articles 121 and 211 restrict discussions in the Legislatures on the conduct of judges of the higher Judiciary. Matters which are *sub judice* also are to be outside the bounds of consideration in the Legislatures. Nonetheless, surcharged moments when this norm is transgressed in the Legislatures are not infrequent. Conformity in this area is a matter of sanctified tradition which has to be assiduously and continuously built up by exercise of mature restraint.

While on the issue of immunities and relationship between the Executive and the Judiciary, we should remind ourselves that the immunities are available only in the realm of civil law.

Societies all over the world, including that of India, have been experiencing spasms of outrage from time to time on what is perceived as judicial activism. A dispassionate analysis of this issue should lead to the root causes of this phenomenon. How does this phenomenon occur? All the three arms of Government are meant to be active. In their mutual interaction, if one arm of governance displays trends towards inactivity or dormancy, the other arms tend to compensate by becoming more than normally active. I have already mentioned that the Legislatures are becoming intensely active in response to the inadequate responses of the Executive in being accountable. Likewise, Executive dormancy does trigger judicial activism. Citizens who feel that their Fundamental Rights are not safeguarded because of State's action or inaction invoke the writ jurisdiction of the courts. If issues which are clearly in the realm of Executive action are taken, because of their political sensitivities, to the Judiciary by recourse to Article 143 of the Constitution, it cannot be blamed on the Judiciary. It can only be blamed on an undesirable proclivity to *acquiescence*.

Judges are but men of flesh and blood. They have indeed on occasions tended to be impacted by Media blitz on certain issues. As I have mentioned elsewhere very recently, there has been a tendency to take recourse to totally avoidable *obiter dicta*. This trend certainly smacks of judicial populism. The affected parties are consequently driven to expensive and desperate recourse to redressal of grievances in the hands of courts of appellate and review jurisdiction. Nor should personalities who have been in high places be denied the remedies available in judicial processes to similarly placed common people, simply for the reason that they have been in high places.

Public interest litigation is, of course, a very vital weapon in the hands of common people to force rectitude on the part of those who hold public offices. Our Judiciary has rendered yeoman service in this area. But those who are in high offices are also vulnerable people for the simple reason that more often, they are not necessarily autonomous in the exercise of decision-making authority. Extraordinary understanding of the governmental system of functioning and a restraint based on such understanding is called for in the matter of admitting public interest litigation. With great respect to our judicial system, and with all the humility at my command, I would like to submit that courts of last resort should not end up becoming courts of first resort.

The present context in India is one of unfortunate communal divide; of trauma inherent in the process of economic reform; and of the aspirations of a vast chunk of humanity which is attempting to make the future safe and prosperous for the present generation. It is in this realisation that the three arms of our governance should function in harmony and cordiality. Our Constitution should be looked upon as an instrument of social change and not as a rigid stick to be wielded in self-defeating exercises.

Most importantly, it should be clear to all that the Legislature and the Judiciary alone proceeds immediately from the suffrage of the people. The issue is not one of supremacy of the Legislature or the paramountcy of the Judiciary. It is clearly one of primacy of the Legislature. And this primacy is indeed the keel on which the balance of our system is poised.

I hope that the Symposium will be marked by a high degree of objectivity and restraint in its deliberations. I wish the Symposium all success.

## LEGISLATURE—EXECUTIVE INTERFACE\*

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I am happy that the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration has very thoughtfully organised this Appreciation Course by the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training for the benefit of the IAS trainees.

The subject on which I have been advised to address is "Relationship between Parliament and Executive". This is indeed an appropriate subject, considering that the trainees assembled here are going to be part of the permanent Executive of the country at the Central and State levels for the next three decades or more. The subject is appropriate as well in a context larger than the immediate professional interest of the trainees. "Accountability" in all its dimensions is the foremost concern of the people of India today. Indeed, it is the subject of hot public debate — that is, accountability of the Parliament to the people; of the Executive to the Parliament; and even of those who are not necessarily immediately part of the Executive, but are connected with the Executive in public domain. "Accountability" is demanded in terms of "transparency". The subject is topical not merely in India but in many countries of the world. "Accountability" in all its broad and comprehensive implications is being gone into right now by the Lord Nolan Committee of the British Parliament. During my recent visit to UK, I interacted with the British parliamentarians and Lord Nolan himself on the subject. For the purpose of reporting on "Standards in Public Life" — that is "Accountability" — by this Committee, the term "holder of Public Office" has been rather comprehensively and inclusively defined to include a very wide spectrum of functionaries — Ministers, Civil Servants, Advisers, Members of Parliament and those connected directly with public bodies.

The issue of accountability was also gone into a detail by the Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies of our country which took place in October 1996. They resolved, and I quote:

"The chain of Accountability — of the Civil Service to the Political Executive; of the Political Executive to the Legislature; and of Legislature to the people — has got snapped all the way. Accountability should be restored at all echelons."

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\*Address to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Probationers on "Relationship between Parliament and Executive" at the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training (BPST), New Delhi, (24 February, 1997).

I know that "Indian Constitution" is a subject in which the Academy gives sound grounding to the IAS trainees. So, I take it that all of you would have a reasonably good idea of our system of parliamentary democracy. A very crucial feature of our system which is significant from the point of view of Executive accountability and to which I would like to draw your attention is that the Prime Minister is part and parcel of the Parliament and, as Head of Government, along with the members of his Council of Ministers, he is accountable to the Parliament. The Government can be removed from Office by a vote of no-confidence by the Parliament. This feature distinguishes the Parliamentary system from the Presidential system. In the latter system (which is also the US system), the President who is directly elected by the people normally continues in Office for his whole term, doubling up as Head of State as well as Head of Government.

What is the dynamics of accountability?

- The Government, that is the Executive, no doubt, concentrates in itself the virtual control of both legislative and executive functions. But, the legislative initiative and executive authority of Government are ultimately contingent upon parliamentary support reflected in its capability to enjoy majority in the Parliament.
- Again, Government programmes and policies involve expenditure and Parliament controls the purse strings. Budget has to be presented to Parliament annually. Tax or expenditure, to be legal, has to be authorised by law by Parliament. This is the "finance" route to secure accountability.
- According to Article 85(1), not more than six months shall intervene between two Sessions of the Parliament. This ensures uninterrupted parliamentary surveillance of the Government.
- In terms of the mechanics of conduct of business of the Parliament, a number of modalities have been established to bring the Executive under daily accounting — starred and unstarred questions, motions for Calling Attention, motions on matters of urgent public importance, half-an-hour discussions, "zero hour" discussions, adjournment motions, budget debates, motion of thanks on Address by the President, Private Members' Resolutions and Bills, no-confidence motions, etc.
- The Parliament has also established a network of Committees to put the actions of the Executive periodically under the microscope. There are as many as 35 such Committees, 17 of which are specifically Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs). The Finance Committees — the Estimates Committee, the Public

Accounts Committee and the Committee on Public Undertakings — have been specially designed to delve into the financial discipline of the Executive. The latter two Committees particularly scrutinise the propriety of expenditure, respectively in the Ministries and Public Sector Enterprises. The Departmentally Related Standing Committees mandatorily examine the Demands for Grants and Bills for enactment of laws as may be referred to them. These Committees also analyse the implementation of developmental programmes of the Government as reflected in the Annual Reports and Performance Budgets of the various Ministries. The Committee on Government Assurances monitors implementation of commitments given by the Government on various issues. The Committee on Subordinate Legislation ensures that the Executive does not vest in itself excessive and arbitrary powers in terms of statutory rules and regulations. The Committee on Petitions provides the interface between the public and the Parliament and draws the attention of the Government to be accountable even to the aspirations of the people brought to them by grassroot level petitioners.

What are the problems in ensuring the accountability of the Executive?

The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. This responsibility is joint and indivisible. There is no specific provision as such in the Constitution spelling out how individual Ministers should hold themselves responsible. In the ultimate analysis, responsibility is also a moral question, ethical question. Individual Ministers have, indeed, accepted responsibility and vacated office even though they may not have been immediately or personally responsible for developments or occurrences in the areas of their portfolios. In this sense, responsibility is also a question of accepting constructive liability. I can, of course, give a large number of examples. A few striking ones are the resignation of late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri on account of a serious railway accident in 1956, resignation of Shri V.K. Krishna Menon after the Chinese aggression of 1962, resignation of Dr. Karan Singh on account of an air crash in 1973 and more recently the resignation of Shri Madhavrao Scindia, again on account of an air crash during the 10th Lok Sabha. But individual Ministers do not always emulate these examples. Instances of those in positions of power accepting constructive liability and overall responsibility are becoming fewer and fewer in number. This is one of the reasons for adverse public reaction. When the political decision-makers do not accept responsibility, the permanent Civil Service under them could also tend to be less responsive and sensitive.

While we do have constitutional provisions and parliamentary rules of business and mechanisms for securing the accountability of the Executive, there is one basic limiting factor — that is, availability of time. It is only about six hours of working time that the Parliament gets for transaction of

daily business. In the Lok Sabha of 545 members, the per capita time available is negligible. Elaborate debates are simply not feasible. The individual Departmentally Related Parliamentary Committees are often mandated to deal with more than one Department. The programmes of Departments are so highly diversified and large in number that these Committees also face serious time constraints in undertaking thorough and exhaustive scrutiny of the performance of the Departments. Cut Motions to Budget are largely symbolic. The net position is that there are limits to ensuring accountability of the Executive.

The Executive, wielding enormous discretion and authority as it does, in the circumstances, has to function with transparency. Transparent style of functioning is an issue of self-regulation and self-discipline. Lack of transparency evokes public suspicion leading to erosion of credibility of the leaders. Erosion of credibility, in turn, impacts on the pattern of voting by the electorate operating as a potent factor contributing to creation of hung Parliaments and consequent instability in governance.

Lack of accountability also results in recourse to judicial remedies, including public interest litigation. When the Judiciary is frequently approached for review of executive decisions, the equation between the Executive and the Judiciary is also disturbed. That is why we are frequently faced with the phenomenon of what has come to be known as judicial activism.

In our country, we do have a large body of parliamentarians who believe in accountability, who want formal and informal mechanisms to be created for ensuring standards in public life.

The Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training undertakes Orientation Programmes for the benefit of not merely civil servants like you, but also for legislators themselves.

In the context of accountability and its ultimate impact on stability in governance, a public debate is already on about whether we should follow the Presidential form of Government. My own personal view is that it is not the form of Government which is relevant. It is rather, the men and women behind the Governments. As Alexander Pope said, "About forms of Government, let fools contest The Government best administered is the best".

I am sure, as members of the permanent Civil Service of our country, you will contribute individually and collectively to accountability of the Executive to the elected representatives of the people who, in turn, will be held accountable to the common people at the time of elections.

I wish all of you glorious careers in the Civil Service and thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## PARLIAMENT, JUDICIARY AND MEDIA — NEW CHALLENGES\*

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I feel honoured that I have been called upon to set the pitch for this Asian Media Convention scheduled for the next two days.

I find from the structuring of the Convention that thematic discussions are going to cover vital and detailed subjects concerning the Media in its relation to the State, human rights, social accountability, areas of common concern and emerging challenges. I am sure that the eminent journalists, parliamentarians, jurists and intellectuals who are here would bring their long and solid experience to bear on the quality of deliberations on these subjects.

I shall first take the subject of the societal role of the Media. Last week, parliamentarians of the world from about eighty countries met in New Delhi at a Media Round Table on a limited subject, namely, "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics". Interactions in the Round Table were rather candid. Several hometruths were presented by the Media persons with impact. These were:

- The Media's role is basically one of reflecting society as it is.
- Media's attention is drawn principally only to new trends and trend setters.
- The Media doesn't take on itself the role of a proactive missionary to change people's attitudes.
- The Media is not monolithic and has its own stratification and internal dynamics.
- Media organizations, particularly where they are proprietor-editor concerns, may tend to change their policies and approaches responding to changes in the State and its governance.

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\*At the Asian Media Convention on "Press, Parliament and Judiciary — Their Interdependence and Emerging Challenges", New Delhi, (22 February, 1997).

There is a case for change of this passive profile of the Media.

Societies all over the world are looking for ever increasing professionalism in delivery of services. Media being an information service has to become increasingly professional.

Journalists have to have strong grounding in the constitutional and legal aspects of their profession. They should understand the history underlying principles, precepts and nuances of natural law, freedom of speech and expression, constitutional provisions and specialised laws like those on libel and slander. They would need to be enlightened and updated on case laws as well. For instance, recently, the Honourable Supreme Court of India has given a pronouncement expanding the scope of freedom of speech. They have held that 'airwaves' are 'public property' and is a part of the freedom of expression. Electronic Media journalists of India should be aware of this.

Media persons should be well versed too in what would constitute sedition, blasphemy and obscenity. This would significantly help in avoidance of the Parliament, the Judiciary and Constitution being brought into contempt and hatred; avoidance of disruption of the secular framework of society; and avoidance of depriving and corrupting the minds of the people.

I would like to urge, as I did recently in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala State, while participating in a Media function that the journalists would also need to become subject matter specialists. I closely follow specialised stories on varied subjects in newspapers and periodicals. They do give incredible exposure to and insight into various subjects — economy, human resource development, foreign and diplomatic relations, social issues like poverty alleviation, employment, environment, terrorism, etc. I also find it a delightful process of perpetual and continuous education to read the stories of law journalists like Shri Noorani and Justice Krishna Iyer — if I can take the liberty of referring to Shri Iyer this way. By becoming specialists on these varied subjects, media persons can provide very useful inputs to Government for policy making and Parliaments to legislate.

The outreach of the print and electronic Media being rather widespread, it can play a very effective role as a potent instrument of education. In many countries, developed and developing, including India, educational programmes are broadcast and telecast. The very process of education has been transformed with thousands of agencies producing software for education at various levels — elementary, secondary, tertiary, technical and professional. In fact, in India, there are instances of even the print Media running, for years, columns on subjects like practical agriculture for the benefit of farmers. These educational programmes are also being run with considerable commercial benefits by the electronic and print Media organisations.

'Human Rights' is a very vast subject. Human rights education as a modality of implementing International Human Rights Instruments has been repeatedly emphasised by the world community. The Media can play a vital role in human rights education — that is, education on what the International Instruments are, what rights are enshrined therein, what constitutes their infringements, what are the procedures for reporting to national and international bodies about them and how to ensure their realisation in law and in practice.

In most countries, constitutional provisions, laws, conventions and practices relating to parliamentary privileges and immunities have implications for relationship between the Media, the Parliament and the Judiciary. As Presiding Officer of the House of the People, I do get representations from parliamentarians regarding stories in the Press and observations in judicial courts about what they consider as breach of their privileges. The factors that are generally known all over the world in regard to parliamentary privileges and immunities which should inform the Media and which are known to judicial bodies are:

- They basically derogate from the principle that the citizens are equal before the law.
- In the early stages of their evolution, they were meant to secure the precarious position of the elected legislative bodies in the face of powerful Governments.
- As the parliamentary system has developed rather strongly over the years, all over the democratic world, they are seen as less obviously justifiable; and the public has tended to be resentful about these being looked upon as personal prerogatives.
- They could be claimed by parliamentarians only in relation to the business of the Parliament.
- No court proceedings will lie in respect of publication of reports, papers, proceedings, etc., by or under the authority of the Parliament.
- Publication, broadcasting and telecasting of true reports of proceedings of Parliament may not render a person liable to civil or criminal proceedings in courts unless malice is proved.
- Anything and everything stated by a member of Parliament within the Parliament in the course of its business would qualify for immunity.
- Actions partaking of, in the nature of crimes will not attract immunities against action in judicial courts. Immunities are available only in the realm of civil law.

In India, Article 361A of the Constitution gives constitutional validity and sanctity for the interface of the Media, including electronic Media with the Legislatures. On the statutory side, the Parliament Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, 1977 has also been enacted. The Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies should keep this in mind and facilitate the Media to play its legitimate role effectively as an intermediary between the Legislatures and the public. Very often, debates in legislative bodies also flow from what is projected by the Media. In my meeting with the Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, held in October 1996, I had brought this home to the Presiding Officers and urged them to provide access for Media persons to important areas of Legislatures, Press Gallery, Central Hall, etc. My assessment is that Legislatures are generally conservative about their interface with the Media. I am for relenting of traditional and conservative approaches.

I believe in balanced presentation of information by the Media to the public. The Conference of Presiding Officers of October 1996 to which I made a reference a little earlier resolved, *inter alia*, that while the Media has a very legitimate role to play in bringing about a healthy interface between the Legislatures and the people, it should come to play a more creative and productive role. It would need to get appropriately oriented such that excessive projection of disruption of business in the Legislatures does not take place and the Media projection is balanced covering the positive side of business actually transacted as well. Indeed, it should be stated to the credit of our parliamentarians that they do have lively debates on matters of serious concern and often have late night sittings upto early hours of the mornings. This side of the parliamentarians' face goes unprojected to the public rather unfairly. I am also organising films being produced in a balanced way to project the productive picture of the parliamentarians alongside their picture in tumult.

In my assessment, there is a very high common measure amongst the legislators, of respect for Judiciary and restraint in matters relating to Parliament-Judiciary interface. Our parliamentarians are indeed aware of Arts. 121 and 211 of the Constitution which restrict discussions in the Legislatures on the conduct of the Judges of the higher Judiciary. No discussions are allowed on matters which are *sub judice*. What, however, contributes to resentment and often tempestuous situation in the Legislatures are tendencies which have been exhibited occasionally by certain courts to make avoidable *obiter dicta*. I have been advocating in this context, that there should be Common Orientation Programmes for the legislators as well as the judicial functionaries. Media persons also could participate in such Orientation Courses. The Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training, which is an institution over two decades old, is equipped to handle such Orientation Courses.

Now, I shall conclude. There is a case for the Media playing a more active role in terms of its societal responsibility; it needs to become a purveyor of balanced news; it should become professional with strong grounding in Media-related laws; its potential for imparting education, including on Human Rights, is immense; Media-Parliament interface is legitimate and should be put on an even keel based on mutual cooperation; largely, legislators know the limits of their domain in relationship to the Judiciary; Judiciary could respond to this with understanding on the problems of the legislators; and there could be common orientation for the Mediamen, legislators and members of the Judiciary.

Thank you all for your kind attention.

Thank you.

## FREE PRESS — A PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY\*

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I have always deemed it a privilege and a pleasure to come to Kerala and mix with her enlightened people. Today's function here is to mark an event which is meant for spreading enlightenment — commencement of the 5th edition of the *Deepika*. At this function we recall with reverence the founder of the 109-year old *Deepika* daily, Blessed Chavara Kuriakose Elias. For him, journalism was a mission, not a mere duty.

The *Deepika*, down its history of more than a century, has consistently stood for certain eternal values — independence and integrity of the nation, democracy, secularism, equity and social justice and good governance. I feel honoured to be associated with the Thiruvananthapuram edition of the *Deepika*. This, I am sure, is the news daily's yet another major step in going still closer to the common man.

President Thomas Jefferson of USA said, I quote: "Our liberty depends on the freedom of the Press, and that cannot be limited without being lost". (unquote). The framers of our Constitution believed in this concept as an article of faith. They incorporated it in our Fundamental Rights. We have practised it as a matter of passion.

Kerala is special among States. One of her specialities is that she is also the land of journalism. Not reckoning newspapers in Hindi, Urdu and English languages which are spoken in several States, and next only to Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, it is in Kerala that there are the largest number of regional language news dailies, nearly two hundred. Tea shops wearing the look of libraries early in the mornings is common sight in Kerala. This is understandable, considering total literacy in the State. Kerala also has the credit of news dailies amongst those having the largest circulation in the country. Every political development, every social attitude, indeed almost every issue ranging from local to international, is mirrored in these news dailies and other journals, distinguishing the people of Kerala as the most conscious and most vigilant in the country. In this age of the electronic Media, the Keralites should not fail to continue their glorious journalistic tradition.

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\*On the occasion of the inauguration of the Fifth Edition of the *Deepika*, Thiruvananthapuram, (15 December, 1996).

Very frequently, even as I take the Chair in the Lok Sabha at the beginning of the day, Honourable members make unscheduled interventions in business with collective concern, or frayed tempers or outraged feelings about the goings-on in the society and the Government. The issues may range from the plight of children in villages to our performance in the United Nations or the WTO. Source of knowledge of these issues would almost invariably be newspaper clippings with a stunning variety of subject titles and a maddening variety of subject presentation. Disorderly and disrupted as the proceedings of the House may appear as newspaper clippings are waved and as the members are agitated, when the din subsides, sobriety sets in, and the Government makes statements on the agitating issues, feelings would sink about the power of the Press and its inevitability in securing Executive accountability to the Legislature.

It is needless for me to say that this power of the Press would need to be wielded with responsibility. It was British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin who used the expression "power without responsibility" to deprecate certain Media tendencies of his days to present half-truths, misrepresentations and publications out of context.

How does the Press wield its power with responsibility? We should practise within our country what we demand from the developed part of the world at the international level, namely 'balanced flow of information'. We are a poor country. In a fast globalising world, we can ill-afford to excessively and one-sidedly project in the Press our failings and negative aspects of our life. Day in and day out, if we depict ourselves as a nation of violators of human rights, of child exploiters or of scamsters, we will lose our international image and become back-numbers in the world, politically as well as economically. Who will respect us unless we have balanced respect for ourselves? Let our Press project our positive sides as well. And, let us liberate ourselves from our masochism and fatalism.

Journalism which is not professional cannot be responsible. We, the politicians, do have our own ways of orienting and reorienting ourselves to Press relations — we always remind ourselves of the saying of a Conservative British parliamentarian that politicians who complain about the Media are like captains of ships who complain about the sea. We will not have to be rough weather creatures if journalism is professional too. Journalists at various levels of seniority as well would need to undergo orientation training in their profession. Budding journalists also should be given induction training. The origins of freedom of expression as an element of natural or common law, the law of sedition, the law of defamation, the law of torts, the case laws on obscenity are all subjects on which journalists should undergo continuous education.

I have myself been a journalist. I have great friends amongst journalists cutting across their hierarchy and I very often candidly interact with them. I do have feedbacks regarding some of their concerns in the field. One concern that is being voiced is that editorial freedom is fast getting eroded and that proprietors and correspondents together relegate the editors to secondary status. Needless for me to say that editorial freedom and excellence need to be given special attention. Otherwise, flow of information will not be free as well as balanced.

My experience is that young journalists who are very knowledgeable, articulate and incisive, often access the Ministries and Departments, asking for material to do 'exclusive stories'. They end up reporting on trivialities relating to the politics of the bureaucracy. At the same time, I also know of journalists who specialise on individual subjects with incredible expertise. There are journals which purvey more information on certain international issues than even the South Block in New Delhi could provide. My appeal to journalists, therefore, is that they should become subject-matter specialists — be it foreign relations, the economy, human resource development, poverty alleviation, employment, environment or women's empowerment. Their inputs reflecting as they do the people's perceptions, could indeed be very vital even for policy formulation by Government.

Kottayam, the Headquarters of *Deepika*, is the hub of journalism in Kerala, if I can put it like that. Keeping this in view, when I was Union Minister for Information, I got a Centre of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication opened at Kottayam. My impression is that this Centre has not made much progress. If the enlightened journalists of Kerala could come together, they can develop this into a Centre of Excellence in Professional Journalism jointly, if need be, with the Mahatma Gandhi University.

Like in any other field of employment, in journalism also, industrial relations continue to be plagued by problems, despite thoughtful efforts at regulating relations through wage boards under the working journalists' law. Long drawn out litigation in courts in the implementation of Awards by Wage Boards has been a common phenomenon. The problem basically stems from different capacities of different journalistic establishments. Scope for innovative modalities of bilateral settlement of issues between the establishments and working and non-working journalists has to be explored. Bilateralism, after all, is what has been recommended by the famous Ramanujam Committee even for general industrial relations in the country.

Journalists do face occupational hazards, often having to gather news from the scene of action at the grassroots. An enlightened approach to providing occupational safety and social security for journalism-based

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employees is needed. The recent amendment to Provident Fund Law for granting pensions also provides for establishment-level pension schemes. This alternative deserves to be carefully taken recourse to.

The *Deepika*, through its news daily and allied journals, has been providing to the public a menu of significant variety catering to the tastes of farmers, lovers of Malayalam literature, the youth, the family, the business people, the job seekers and the lovers of sports, not to speak of *marunadan* Malayalees, the overseas Keralites.

News dailies of repute the world over are now available on the Internet. If my suggestion is not considered wild, I may be permitted to say that the *Deepika* can make itself available for the overseas Keralites in the Roman script on the Internet.

It was His Holiness the Pope who inaugurated the Centenary Celebrations of the *Deepika*. I am sure that the benediction of His Holiness is there with the *Deepika* at this 5th edition as well as eternally.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Thiruvananthapuram edition of the *Deepika*.

## SOCIETY, POLITY AND MEDIA\*

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Today, the Media has come to be recognised as an inevitable pillar of civilised governance all over the world. Society is the people themselves. As Aristotle said, "Man is by nature a political animal". When members of society politically organise themselves to harmonise their individual and collective interests, the State emerges. What we call polity is the State as a political entity.

When the State is constituted by the society as a collective political entity, those who run the State as representatives of the society in the Government come to wield the enormous powers of the State. Members of the society are often apprehensive of the manner of exercise of these powers by those in positions of authority in the Government of the day who run the State apparatus. Motivated by this apprehension, they establish constitutional and statutory provisions for the protection of the individual's basic human rights. One of the fundamental human rights is the right to freedom of speech and expression. The Media is the institutional mechanism to articulate this freedom. Thus the society, the polity and the Media have an inevitable and natural mutual interface.

The Media has come to be known as the Fourth Estate, because of the immense power it has come to wield. The expression Fourth Estate was coined by Edmund Burke to indicate the influential position of the Press in the British political community. Having referred to the Aristocracy, the Church and the Commons, Burke said "there are three Estates in Parliament; but in the Reporter's Gallery yonder there sits a Fourth Estate more important far than they all".

All of us are aware that we have a very strong and diversified print Media. We have over 1500 newspaper establishments, including publications of different periodicals. About 40,000 newspapers find their place on the live register of the Registrar of Newspapers. The circulation of newspapers and periodicals is of the order of 64 million. The four news agencies of India —

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\*At the Second Durga Das Memorial Lecture on "Media, Society and Polity", New Delhi, (23 April, 1997).

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Press Trust of India, United News of India, Samachar Bharati and Hindustan Samachar — are reputed for their vibrancy.

I have always felt that those who regularly go through some of the newspapers and journals of our country can develop themselves into subject matter specialists. I refer to the highly researched and specialised stories and articles that are being brought out by the print Media by availing of the services of experts in various subjects – be it internal security, international relations, defence, economy, employment situation or human resource development. I am aware that several national and regional news dailies even devote special columns for disseminating information on the technology, problems of agriculture, in a language which could be understood by the farmers and other common people. Indeed, I would go to the extent of saying that our Media is in the nature of a resource institution for non-formal education and is in the nature of a distance education institution.

The freedom of the Media is, of course, such that it cannot be lightheartedly limited without being lost. However, certain reasonable restrictions have been considered appropriate. That is why, Article 19 of our Constitution which enshrines freedom of speech and expression came to be amended in 1951 and 1963. The amendments provide for restrictions in the interests of friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation or incitement to offences, apart from the sovereignty and integrity of India. Responsible Media persons would need to have sound knowledge of this and should have professional training on the scope of freedom of speech and expression, the roots of this freedom in natural or common law, the law of sedition, the law of defamation, the law of torts, court rulings on obscenity, etc.

The relationship between the Media and the individual often becomes a matter of controversy. The basic principle of criminal jurisprudence in the civilised world is that a person should be construed as innocent until proved guilty in due process of law. When men and women in public service as well as business come under judicial scrutiny in respect of their decisions, they also come under public scrutiny through the Media. The Media projection of the individuals concerned may make them or destroy them. While the judicial process involves collection of evidence, the examination of such evidence in terms of its credibility, entering findings and delivery of judgement, Media scrutiny does not go through this full process. Individuals concerned who may be proved innocent through the judicial process ultimately may, in the meantime, on account of Media scrutiny have their reputation and image damaged for ever. It is when the Media does not exercise restraint in respect of matters like this, it gets to be accused of exercising power without responsibility. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher often used to caution against the limitations and dangers of what she called “trial by the Press”.

Of course, we do have the Press Council of India which facilitates self-regulation by the Media of standards in dissemination of news. And no doubt, this self-regulation should continue. Innovating modalities of making self-regulation more effective should be examined by the Media through the Press Council of India itself.

Information is a subject which is frequently discussed in international fora, particularly UNESCO. We have always demanded that there must be "balanced flow of information", considering that the industrialised nations always dominated the Media and do not necessarily project a balanced picture of poorer nations. Our call for balanced flow of information is much relevant within our country as well. Our large, medium and small newspapers do have different kinds of orientation and perspectives. They would also need to facilitate balanced flow of information within the country in terms of journalistic code. There are certain hot issues like exploitation of children, human rights, etc. We are indeed making very serious and sincere efforts at tackling these problems. But often only the negative side of the picture is presented, without any presentation of information on the positive steps being taken. This kind of projection of issues, while not being fair, will only help in projecting a garbled image of ourselves as wanton exploiters of children and violators of human rights. This has implications for our standing in the international community as well.

The Media has a lively presence in the Parliament. In the Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India which took place in October '96, I reminded the Presiding Officers of Article 361A of the Constitution which gives validity and sanctity for the interface between the Media and the Legislatures. I also reminded them of the Parliament Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, 1977. This constitutional provision and law provide immunity to the Media on reporting about the proceedings of the Legislatures so far as they do not contain expunged portions of the proceedings and the reports are not in the nature of comments, are substantially true, and are without malice. I also reminded the Presiding Officers that they should establish meaningful systems of access for the Media to important areas of the Legislatures — Press Galleries, common hall, etc. Further, I urged that traditional and conservative approaches of the Legislatures in their interface with the Media should be releted. One conclusion that emerged strikingly from the Conference of Presiding Officers was that while the Media should play its legitimate role in bringing about a healthy interface between the Legislatures and the people, it should come to play a more creative and productive role and that the Media projection should be balanced covering the positive side of business actually transacted as well as developments in the nature of disruption of business. Being concerned about concentration on the stormy aspect of Parliament business, legislators feel that it would be worthwhile for production of films based on pre-recorded proceedings of serious business transacted by the Parliament.

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In the Specialised Inter-Parliamentary Conference which India hosted in February, 1997 on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics", we organised a Media Round Table. The objective was to look at the Media's perspective of the partnership dimension of women's involvement in politics. What emerged clearly in this Round Table was that the Media has only been playing its traditional role of reflecting some striking aspects of *status quo* and trends whatever be the issue. It was pointed out by Media experts that the Media can only play the role of the mirror and not of a missionary in the cause of issues. While this may be professional approach from the point of view of the Media, considering the power and influence it wields and its outreach to the people, it would be worthwhile for the Media to introspect and consider whether it cannot play a proactive role on matters concerning certain basic national issues like literacy, population, education, employment, poverty alleviation, economic development, environment, empowerment of women, etc.

In the Parliament, we also have a Library and Reference Service. Throughout the year, during Sessions and out of Sessions, there is always a run on this Service for newspaper clippings on an endless variety of news items, subjects and stories. Whether they be relevant to local, regional, national or international issues, members of Parliament turn to this Service. Most often, in the context of our organised as well as Zero Hour business, members of Parliament refer to these news items for projecting their viewpoints and concerns. This indicates the grassroot level spread of the Press individually or collectively through news agencies. This also indicates how the Press becomes instrumentality for the Parliament to secure accountability of the Government.

The vibrant democracy we are, there is a strong demand in our country for a law on right to information. There are also decisions of our Supreme Court that the right to know is implicit in the fundamental right of speech and expression guaranteed in our Constitution by Article 19. In this context, there are also demands for significantly amending the Official Secrets Act on the ground that this Act was after all an instrument of colonial domination. On the other hand, there are those who believe that the right to information without guaranteed right to livelihood, to work and to be educated, will not be meaningful. There should be an informed and wide ranging national debate on this matter of a law for right to information.

I thank the organisers of this function, particularly Mr. Inder Jit for having invited me to be amidst you and sharing some of my thoughts on the subject of today's Lecture.

## MEDIA-LEGISLATURE INTERFACE\*

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It is a rare distinction that a journalist should have half a century of experience in rendering service as reporter on the Constituent Assembly and the Parliament. Shri Krishan Kumar has done just this. He has worked for national and international newspapers and agencies. He represents continuity in time and in the thought processes of the framers of our Constitution and members of eleven Lok Sabhas and their counterparts in the Rajya Sabha.

I have always considered that each individual is a library by himself, carrying a lot of knowledge gained by experience. It would, indeed, be quite interesting if Shri Krishan Kumar could write about his experience of the Constituent Assembly and the Parliament as institutions; his experience about the performance of the parliamentarians of yesteryears; and about the moments of elation, depression, humour and turbulence as he might have witnessed in the Houses over the years. Fifty years of the history of our representative institutions at the national level seen through the eyes of a journalist should be an enlightening contribution in the Golden Jubilee year of our Independence, our democracy.

Last October, we had a meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Legislative Bodies of India. One of the subjects discussed by the Presiding Officers was Media-legislative body interface. Opinion was unanimous that the approach to the Media should be less conservative. While greater access to the Media was recommended, it was felt that reporting should not be concentrated exclusively or disproportionately on the negative aspects of proceedings, but that it should as well be on a lot of good work done in the Houses. Imbalances in reporting could do much damage to the parliamentary institutions.

I do not know how much freedom the reporters, in fact, enjoy in impacting through their reports on the presentation of news by their newspapers. But, I have learnt, during my experience as Minister for Information & Broadcasting, and recently as Presiding Officer of a Special

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\*At the reception of Shri Krishan Kumar, Journalist, on completion of half a century of his service in reporting on the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly and the Lok Sabha, New Delhi, (30 July, 1997).

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Inter-Parliamentary Conference, which, *inter alia*, organised a Media Round Table, that editorial freedom is getting increasingly abridged. I have also learnt that as a matter of policy, the media only tries to mirror the happenings of the day, and does not assume for itself any role directly or indirectly on ventilating specific causes and concerns. I would feel that the Media owes it to the country, the people at large, to play a more active role in projecting national concerns zealously. If we are to become an enlightened society, we should become an informed society as well. The print Media, particularly, being accessed by the literate and the educated people who play a vital role in opinion making, has a special role to play in facilitating balanced flow of information.

Values are changing in every sphere of life. I am sure the area of journalism is not an exception to this. Veteran journalists like Shri Krishan Kumar can make meaningful contributions to shaping the styles of the younger generations of journalists.

I felicitate Shri Krishan Kumar on his service to the Constituent Assembly, the Parliament and the people of our country. I wish him many more years of fruitful service.

Thank you.

## MEDIA—A WATCH-DOG OVER GOVERNMENT\*

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It is a matter of immense pleasure for me to be with you this morning on this occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of the Indian Journalists Association. I am always at home with journalists because before I seriously entered into the political world I was myself a journalist in my own humble way, having been editor of a daily *Chandambeni Kalrang*.

As the Indian Journalists Association is celebrating its Platinum Jubilee and our country is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its Independence, we cannot but recall the glorious role played by journalism as a profession in our Independence movement. Our great leaders of freedom struggle were themselves fearless journalists. Several journals have a hallowed place in our history — *Keerti* of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, *Kesri* of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Swaraj* of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, *Punjabi* of Lala Lajpat Rai and *Ghaddar* of Veer Savarkar were part and parcel of our freedom struggle and are too well known to be forgotten. Mahatma Gandhi ran the *Harijan*, Jawaharlal Nehru was a founder of the *National Herald*, Aruna Asaf Ali was associated with *Patriot* and *Link* and the contribution of *Al Hilal* of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad for the awakening of the Muslim world was invaluable.

It is common knowledge that the Media and mass communication are a pillar of democracy. If the world today acknowledges that India is a democracy in the true sense of the term, it is also because of the vibrancy of our Media. In our print Media, we have 41 centenarians. The first ever newspaper of India, the *Bengal Gazette*, was published from this very town, Calcutta in the year 1780. The first language paper of India was also published from Calcutta. My reference is to *Dig Darshan* in Bengali published in the year 1818. Today we have, in our country, about 1500 newspaper establishments. The number of newspapers carried on the live register of the Registrar of News Papers is about 40,000. The circulation of our newspapers and periodicals is over 64 million.

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\*At the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of the Indian Journalists Association, Calcutta, (15 November, 1997).

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In the theory of mass media and communication, often reference is made to different models. These are :

- The pluralist model in which debates and discussions are allowed in the Media on all political views, promoting democracy and functioning as a watch-dog over Government.
- The market model in which what is done is mere reflection of the views of the consumers, *i.e.* the readers of journals, thus catering to the requirements of the masses.
- The elite-value model in which the Media articulates the views of specific groups, the professionals, the intellectuals, the middle class, etc.
- The dominant ideology model in which the Media propagates ideas and values of those believing in different ideologies.

In our country, the Media is a mix of all these models and this status of the Media at once reflects its vibrancy.

A couple of days back, I was in Thailand, leading a Parliamentary Delegation. Different newspapers were agog with different views, versions and assessments of who was going to be the new Prime Minister. Some of our hosts stated that the surest way to get puzzled on their political developments would be attempting to assess the situation through journals. This is true of our mixed model Media as well. However, the blinding light of endless different streams of information provided by the Media, even if it is on the same subject, is any day better than the blinding darkness of muzzled Media. Indeed, the difference between vibrancy and muteness of the Media is also the difference between democracy and the lack of it. We should be proud of our vibrant Media, our live democracy. We should guard them with eternal vigil.

Whenever I meet journalists, I never get tired of repeating that they should become increasingly professional. They need to have sound grounding on the history of journalism in the world, and on the regime of the laws which have implications for journalistic profession — like the laws on libel, defamation, obscenity, privileges, contempt, etc.

These are days of specialisation. Indeed, specialisation is a route to professionalism. Journalists, having access to information as they are, have tremendous scope for turning into specialists and authorities on individual subjects such as international relations, the economy of the country, banking and finance, poverty alleviation, women's issues, multi-party democracy, national and international security, human rights, environment, etc. Of course,

our newspapers and journals do carry very well researched and informed special articles contributed by syndicated columnists and other specialists. This is indeed a salutary service. Journalists themselves could identify specific subjects according to their aptitudes and specialise on them for rendering increasingly professional service to the people.

Often, journalists do bring out stories on transfers and postings of civil servants and politics of the bureaucracy in Ministries and Departments. I have felt that in this kind of journalism, officials of Government use the journalist for promoting their own individual or group interests. Perhaps, this is a type of market model of journalism about which I made reference earlier. This kind of journalism does not serve any public purpose. I do concede that journalism cannot be altogether divorced from the commercial and the market angle because after all newspapers and journals are an industry. But, even in market-oriented journalism, journalists as professionals need to have a code of conduct according to which they will draw a border line within which alone they will work.

Journalists are very potent opinion makers. We in our country are passing through a sea change in the political front. Politics has become highly competitive. Parties have multiplied. Regional, group and individual aspirations have significantly contributed to this trend of multiplication of parties. Consequently, multi-party system has become more complicated. Hung Parliaments and Legislatures are getting repeated. While this is the domestic political situation, internationally, our country and our economy have to face the challenges of globalisation. In this scenario, there is need for a balanced flow of information through the Media. The positive as well as the negative aspects of our political and economic life need to be reflected objectively. Excessive concentration on the negative side of our life can neither contribute to our political stability or correct projection of our economic status, nor help in presenting ourselves with dignity before the international community. The might and power of Media, if wielded with balance and responsibility, will go a long way in strengthening the forces of democracy in our country.

It is the constitutional right of the Media to have access to the legislative bodies of our country. As Speaker of the Lok Sabha and as the Chairman of the Conferences of Presiding Officers of the Legislative Bodies, I have always exhorted that the Media should be given increasing access to parliamentary proceedings, shedding conservative orientations. At the same time, reflecting the views of the Presiding Officers and parliamentarians and legislators, I would take this opportunity to appeal to the journalist friends here that they should also spare their columns and footages to the enormous volume of constructive work that is also being done in the legislative bodies. As of now, this aspect goes virtually unprojected, concentration most often being on turbulent and stormy situations on the floor of the Houses.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, my message to all of you on this occasion of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the Indian Journalists Association is :

- Pay homage to our freedom fighters who were also journalists; cherish their ideals and try to live up to them.
- Continue to remain vibrant and thereby strengthen the forces of democracy in our country.
- Become increasingly professional and specialise on subjects and issues of national importance for the purpose.
- Set outermost limits to market orientation and make these limits part of your code of conduct.
- Facilitate balanced flow of information, especially in respect of the performance of legislative bodies.
- Wield your might and power with restraint and responsibility.

I wish the Indian Journalists Association many more jubilees and service to the nation.

Thank you.

## FREE PRESS—MIRROR OF PUBLIC OPINION\*

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I have great pleasure in associating myself with the inauguration of the *Mahanaagar Times*. I understand that this newspaper is going to be a landmark in the journalistic history of Rajasthan; that the news coverage is going to be a wide spectrum of subjects — local, national and international affairs, politics, economics, education, health, science and technology, entertainment, etc. The proposed news coverage is, indeed, very ambitious. Being a newspaper sought to be brought out in Hindi, information flow, I am sure, is going to be for the benefit of thousands of ordinary people. This is a commendable venture and I felicitate its owners and the working and non-working journalists who would be associated with it.

If our country is respected as a true democracy in the world, it is because of the freedom of the Press which we enjoy in our country, thanks to the framers of our Constitution and first generation leaders. In fact, journalism was one of the instruments by the wielding of which our leaders secured freedom for us.

Over 50 years of our Independence, we have been able to protect and preserve our Press freedom on account of the vigilance of the people and the Legislatures, conscious policy of successive Governments, solidarity of the journalists and the activeness of the Judiciary. Our people and institutions should continue to strive in tandem to safeguard and promote this freedom.

We are a developing country in which about 36 per cent of the people live below the poverty line. Particularly in this context, the journalistic profession has a special social responsibility. This responsibility is basically one of generating awareness amongst the people about crucial national values like unity and integrity of the country, communal amity, tolerance and peace. It is understandable that newspapers being commercial establishments, they cannot turn themselves into moralising documents. But messages on national values can be conveyed in very many different subtle ways of thoughtful presentation of news and information. Whether it be about political or societal developments, individuals, including those in positions of power, authenticity

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\*At the inauguration of *Mahanaagar Times*, Jaipur, (23 November, 1997).

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of news and objectivity of the news presentation should be sought to be ensured. Exaggerated presentation of local conflicts could lead to serious social upheavals; inadequately informed news presentation on developments on the economic front could seriously damage the interests of national economy; and sensationalized news presentation on those in positions of authority could unfairly destroy their image and reputation. Distortions or *mala fide* presentation of news would be morally inconsistent with the sanctity of Press freedom.

Several newspapers and journals in our country do carry columns and stories vitally relevant to the day-to-day life of the common people in various vocations and professions, serving a very useful social purpose. For example, farmers do look forward to agricultural news like on weather conditions, crop prospects, prices of agricultural produce, etc. Economic policy formulators benefit by well researched articles carried in journals on current problems in the areas of public and corporate finance and other sectors of the economy. Diplomats get clarity and insights on matters of their professional interest through writings on international relations. I hope that the *Mahanagar Times* would also develop into a specialised journal of interest to common people as well as professionals.

The so-called 'investigative journalism' is very popular with many who have taken to journalism as a profession. This has almost become a fashion, mainly for the reason that those in positions of power by nature as well as on account of the regime of laws that we have, practise a working style which militates against transparency. Statutes like the Official Secrets Act and certain emergency legislations restrict free flow of information. Privilege in regard to certain kinds of information can also be claimed on grounds such as public interest, security of the State, relations with foreign countries, etc. Media and legal experts have, indeed, gone into the issue of right to information in this context. The Governments of Tamil Nadu and Goa have also enacted laws on the subject. The basic issue, however, is one of development of a tradition of transparency — whether it be in Government or the corporate world or even the world of Non-Government Organisations. And, laws by themselves will not be adequate. And, limits to right to information are more difficult of implementation than stipulation. Even as right to information is important to make freedom of the Press true and meaningful, objective and autonomous editorial policies are also important within the world of the print Media. In a Round Table with the Media organised in February 1997, as part of an International Conference of Parliamentarians in New Delhi, it came out clearly that the community of Editors could not, themselves, boast of autonomy because of the restrictive policies of the proprietors. Editorial freedom is as much important for freedom of the Press as right to information.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed :

To my mind, the Freedom of the Press is not just a slogan from a broader point of view but it is an essential attribute of a democratic process. I have no doubt that even if the Government dislikes the liberties taken by the Press and considers them dangerous, it is wrong to interfere with the freedom of the Press. By imposing restrictions, you do not change anything; you merely suppress the public manifestation of certain things, thereby causing the idea and thought underlying them to spread further. Therefore, I would rather have a completely free Press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated Press.

While Jawaharlal Nehru laid emphasis on total freedom for the Press, Mahatma Gandhi stressed on the educative role of the Press. He stated, "the role of the Press consists not only in reflecting public opinion but instructing it and giving it proper orientation and guidance." If the Press is to be free as well as be capable of reflecting and instructing public opinion, it is obvious that it should have freedom within itself in terms of editorial autonomy.

Many of our newspapers and journals are more than hundred years old. I hope and wish that the *Mahanagar Times* will also become a centenarian, standing by the ideals of Jawaharlal Nehru as well as Mahatma Gandhi and practising editorial freedom, serving the people of Rajasthan as well as our country. I wish the newspaper commercial and professional success.

Jai Hind.

## FREE PRESS—BACKBONE OF DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM\*

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I feel privileged and honoured to have been invited to inaugurate this function on the occasion of the Third K.C. Mammen Mappillai Memorial Lecture. I am also very pleased, particularly because I can lay claim to membership in the fraternity of journalists, having been a journalist myself in earlier years.

On this occasion, my mind is at once crowded by a lot of memories and thoughts about the late K.C Mammen Mappillai as well as the *Malayala Manorama*.

Freedom of the Press, of Expression, is one of those basic human rights which, according to Alexander Hamilton, one of the framers of the U.S. Constitution, "are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of divinity itself; and cannot be erased or obscured by mortal power". The proscription of *Manorama* and prosecution and conviction of Mammen Mappillai about half a century back was a sad effort at erasure, by a mortal power, of the divine right of the individual to Freedom of Expression. Indeed, Mammen was the victim of human rights violation. And, *Manorama*, for all time to come, shall be remembered as a living monument of human rights.

The pluralism of Indian society is significantly due, among other factors, to multiplicity of languages. *Manorama* lends herself to rendering service to the people of the country in different languages. The highly popular *Manorama Year Book* is now being brought out in four different languages — English, Malayalam, Hindi and Tamil.

The English news weekly, *The Week*, started by *Manorama* just a decade and a half back has emerged as a much sought after periodical of international standards, capable of generating social, political and economic awareness amongst people about wide ranging issues at the local, regional, national and international levels.

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\*At the Third K.C. Mammen Mappillai Memorial Lecture by Mr. Eugene L. Roberts, Managing Editor, *The New York Times* and Chairman, International Press Institute, New Delhi, (16 December, 1997).

The growth of *Manorama* has kept pace with the evolution of printing and communications technology — through various systems of printing to facsimile transmission to computerised digital photo transmission. Now we have the 'Manorama Vision', the satellite telecasting facility of the organisation.

Agriculture is the backbone of India. It accounts for one-third of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Sixty-five per cent of the work force of the country is employed in agriculture. *Manorama* has been running special features in simple language that could be understood by ordinary farmers on agriculture technology concerning different crops, particularly those of Kerala. In fact, this service is in the nature of farm information support to the agricultural extension activities of Government agencies. The *Karshaka Shri Award* instituted by *Manorama* is symbolic of her identity with the farming community and her outreach much beyond her commercial interests.

About thirty-six per cent of the people of India, more than three hundred million, live below the poverty line. *Manorama's* concern for the poor and the handicapped often gets reflected in substantial activities like provision of houses for the homeless, participation in reconstruction of the earthquake hit village of Latur in Maharashtra, etc.

The youth constitute one-third of India's population. Today, their feelings are a mix of helplessness and hope — helplessness, because of acute unemployment and underemployment; and hope because of their rather touching faith in the future. The 'Bala Jana Sakhyam' which, by simple translation means youth association, supported by *Manorama* just holds out this faith for the youth, diverting their power into constructive channels and making them an enlightened and humane lot.

One of the serious maladies of today's India is an all-round crisis in leadership. The 'Bala Jana Sakhyam' prepares the youth for tomorrow's leadership, a leadership characterised by probity and standards in public life, even as reflected in some of today's leaders who have had the privilege of being moulded by this quiet movement.

Women, as in many other parts of the world, are a discriminated lot in India — whether it be at the house-hold, societal or political levels or in power structures. The periodical "Vanitha ", that is, "The Woman" is *Manorama's* simple but significant contribution to the empowerment of women.

The Right to Information and the Right to Privacy of the individual, as in many other countries, has often come into conflict in India as well. Article 19 of Constitution of India which guarantees, *inter alia*, the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression was amended in the year 1963 providing

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for reasonable restrictions thereon on grounds of sovereignty and integrity of the country, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation and incitement to offence. What would be reasonable restrictions has been interpreted and reinterpreted by courts in the country. However, the protagonists of transparency and accountability on the part of Government have been demanding Right to Information. Indeed, there is a body of opinion that expressions such as security of the State, public order, etc. could be stretched by those in positions of power to deny flow of information to the public. Recently, even a Private Member's Bill was sought to be introduced in the Lok Sabha pressing for statutory provision of Right to Information. On the other hand, those in positions of power, not necessarily being totally autonomous in decision-making, do apprehend that Right to Information could also be abused by unscrupulous individuals. The lines of demarcation between the Right to Information which has immediate implications for Freedom of Expression and the Right to Privacy have to be necessarily delineated with reference to the social values and democratic experiences of each country apart from the professionalism of the Media. And, objectivity is an inevitable characteristic of Media professionalism.

If *Manorama* in its diversified manifestations has become the inevitable companion for millions of readers, it is because of the ceaseless efforts and obsessive journalistic professionalism of the men and women behind it over five generations since the days of Kandathil Varghese Mappillai, the founder.

There are certain things in human life which are of abiding interest to all cutting across age, the young and the old. One of them is the fun and frolic of children. *Manorama* used to present in her Malayalam weekly a cartoon feature 'Boban and Molly', the eternal kids who, like Dennis the Menace, were enchanting for their pranks. Through features about these two kids, *Manorama* had helped adults discover children in themselves, and children discover adults in themselves. This feature always used to appear in the last page of the *Manorama* weekly. It used to be so interesting, absorbing and amusing that readers mostly started reading the weekly from the last page backwards. These days, we miss 'Boban and Molly'. Creative and versatile as they are, will it be too much, if I appeal to *Manorama* to reinstate features like 'Boban and Molly'?

For *Manorama*, the old century, that is the 19th, was the century of its birth. Her new century, the 20th, plunged her in to termination for nearly a decade during the days of K.C. Mammen Mappillai. The indomitable person that he was, he resurrected *Manorama*, proving to the world — to use the title of one of Ian Fleming's works — that "You Only Live Twice". After the

resurrection of *Manorama*, Mammen Mappillai himself and his successors, in their own courageous as well as subtle ways, have addressed age-old troubles of humanity — aggression on human rights, poverty and deprivation, natural calamities, discrimination against women, helplessness of the youth, etc. — pressing *Manorama* into the service of forces of democracy.

We are at the threshold of yet another century, the 21st. Mr. Bernard Levin who delivered the Second Mammen Mappillai Memorial Lecture in 1993 observed, I quote : "...the notable quality of democracy is its fragility, and again and again through the ages, it has broken in the hands of the holder...I claim to believe that if dark days are coming — days in which freedom would not necessarily be taken for granted — the last line of defence would be the Press" (unquote). I have no doubts that if freedom and democracy would be threatened in the new century into which we are transiting, *Manorama* will be a fortress in this last line of defence. With these words, I am immensely pleased to inaugurate this function.

Thank you.

## FUTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY\*

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It is universally considered that India is the largest democracy in the world. We are bound to appreciate the significance of this truism if we look around the world today — particularly, if we have an insight into the political systems of several countries in the world cutting across regions — Latin America, Africa and West, South and East Asia. Indeed, we have had a truly democratic heritage since ancient times. Parliamentary institutions, in the modern sense of the term, grew up in India since the British rule. But in ancient times, we did have democratically constituted institutions of governance, upward from tiny village entities. The history of democratic institutions in India goes back to about 3000 years before Christ. The Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda do speak of non-monarchical republics — the *Samgha* and *Gana*. *Gana Rajya* was a republican model.

Now, we are on our way to celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. On the 9th of December, 1996, we will be commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the first sitting of the Constituent Assembly. We have had Ten Lok Sabhas, the current one is the Eleventh. We have evolved and established our own parliamentary practices and conventions. We have had our own experience with the protection of our Constitution, with the watchful reflexes of our people and sober guidance and rulings of eminent jurists who have adorned our judicial system and who have established the concept of unalterability of the basic structure of the Constitution. Yet, we have wielded the Constitution as a live and dynamic instrument for bringing about social and economic change. The 80th and 81st Constitutional Amendments are on the anvil.

It is in the above background that we have to ask the question: What is the future of democracy in India?

Very frequently, questions have been raised and debated on the quality of people represented on our legislative bodies. All over the democratic world, and significantly in India, political parties have been going down, even as trade unions have been going down. Loss of faith in politics and political

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\*At the Bengal Initiative Session, Calcutta, (30 November, 1996).

institutions are challenges which are being seriously faced in the democracies of Western Europe and USA as well. Mass parties and mass mobilising organisations have had tendencies to decline very strongly. All the political parties, in this context, need to do soul searching. In many parties the rank and file and lower and regional formations have been at war with what we frequently refer to as the "High Commands". There are frequent and almost persistent calls for "inner party democracy". The fractures in individual parties have serious impact on governance — formation as well as running of Governments. The Election Commission of India has even gone to the extent of directing all political parties to constitute their various governing bodies and committees and elect office bearers at all levels by the 1st of January, 1997. We may feel outraged about this kind of directive. But the parties themselves can ill afford to leave initiative for inner party democratic processes to exhortation from external institutions. It may be worthwhile considering whether we should not have a law on political parties on the German model — that is, the Basic Law of Germany. This law, *inter alia*, stipulates that the internal organisation of political parties must conform to democratic principles and that they must publicly account for the source of their funds. It also has provisions relating to nominations of candidates for elections, principles and purview of election expenses, administrative structure, party conference, elections to party organisation, etc.

The structure of political parties and their own inner governance should carry credibility among every one of its members and workers. Legitimacy at the party level is as sacrosanct as it is at the level of any Government that comes into existence. With this legitimacy alone will parties be in a position to organise the electorate which is their basic function.

A lot of awareness would need to be created amongst the ordinary voters themselves about the sanctity and worthwhileness of the exercise of franchise. Like political parties, political trust (trust of the people in the political leaders) has also been on a big decline over the years. This again is not a purely Indian phenomenon. This is a world problem. Studies and surveys conducted have revealed that in USA, during 1992, only around 30 per cent of the people thought that the Government was run for the benefit of all. Only about 8 per cent of the people had confidence in the US Congress in 1993. This problem in India at present is rather too serious. This is reflected even in our highly popular visual media, that is, the films. In the earlier years, villains in our films were harsh mothers-in-law or vampish women; then came the unscrupulous village chieftains; still later came the smugglers and anti-nationals; and today, sadly, the villains in our movies are political leaders.

The percentage of voter turnout in elections reflects an all pervasive apathy amongst the voters. Significant percentage of voters do not turn out for voting in elections. Even in most of the American Presidential elections, the level of voter turnout does not reach the level of 50 per cent.

We have had a lot of turbulence, violence and tensions in the conduct of elections in the past. Of late, obviously, in this background, the Election Commission has come to introduce a lot of regimentation in the processes of the conduct of elections. While it has had a salutary impact in terms of discipline, and has also received a good and broad measure of acceptance and appreciation by the people in general, it has also imposed serious restrictions in the conduct of effective campaigns. Elections are to be free and fair. While discipline and regimentation are indeed required for the conduct of fair elections, too much of it may stand in the way of elections being free. Elections with inadequate campaigns cannot be considered as free elections.

We seem to have entered the phase of Governments through coalition. The contributory factors are many. It is on account of factors I have already mentioned — decline of political parties, decline of people's trust in political leaders and their apathy, resulting in lower level of voter turnout. It is also due to emergence of strong regional parties and leaders reflecting regional aspirations. These regional parties and leaders do not have nation-wide presence. Lack of ideological orientation amongst groups of people and strong personality orientation amongst them result in politically powerful individual leaders emerging on the scene. Such leaders do not have significantly wide political base. The net result of these factors is that no single party is in a position to acquire simple majority on its own and form a Government. Losers come together, mostly after the elections, and try to form a Government. This is the perfect recipe for instability in governance. But there is nothing to despair about it. Our political parties have the genius and experience enough to come together and make governance possible. We should remember that Governments through coalition have been successfully practised for years in the States of Kerala and West Bengal.

In Mauritius, from where a Parliamentary Delegation visited India a couple of days back, they have a system of allowing the "best losers" to participate in Government. After all, what is the status of the largest single political party? It is only that of the best loser in the Mauritian language. So the solution for stability in governance where no party commands simple majority is in the best of losers coming together and making governance possible. Ideally, based on prudent assessment of electoral practices, political parties can come together before elections on a common minimum platform, fight elections on that basis, and then form Government with convincing levels of legitimacy.

We have political leaders and thinkers who believe that the Presidential form of Government may be more suited to India. In the Presidential form, the President is also directly elected. He becomes Head of the Government as well as the State. In our parliamentary form, on the other hand, the Prime Minister is drawn from the Parliament and he is the Head of the Government. The President is elected indirectly by an electoral college consisting of members of both the Houses of Parliament and of the Legislative Assemblies of States. He is the Head of the State.

In the Presidential system, being directly elected by the people, the President normally occupies office for the full term. It is construed that this will be conducive to stability in Government unlike in the British model where a Government can be voted out by the legislative bodies. Providing stability to Government by mere structural transformation need not necessarily be an ideal arrangement. Even as the recent developments in the American political front reflect, the Democratic President and the Republican Congress, while they may sit together and provide stability, have had conflicts and tensions. Stability of this nature may not necessarily be conducive to smooth governance and it could, in the Indian context, result in as much stagnation of social and economic policies as an unstable parliamentary form of Government can cause. Whether it be Parliamentary form or Presidential form, what is basically required is the *will of the people to make the system work*.

One of the serious matters of concern the world over has been political participation of women. In fact, in February 1997, India is hosting an International Parliamentary Conference on Partnership between Men and Women in Politics. At present, it is the Nordic countries which have the highest level of women's political participation, if membership of women in Parliament is taken as the parameter. Then comes some of the Latin American countries and China. In India, women's participation is only of the order of 8 per cent. The 81st Constitutional Amendment now on the anvil is to consider 1/3rd reservation for women in the Parliament. Universal Adult Franchise has not necessarily helped women come to positions of political power and empowerment of women is the rationale of the 81st Constitutional Amendment. Reservation is in the nature of "affirmative action" or "favourable discrimination". Women in India, with their traditional values and work culture, as mothers in charge of households, can bring about significant changes in the quality of work in legislative bodies and in the Government. From the days of our freedom struggle, we have had great women leaders. Indira Gandhi has been an internationally renowned woman Prime Minister. There have been women Chief Ministers in States. There are very successful women in various professions. No doubt they can succeed in politics as well, given the opportunities. There are, of course, people who believe that a

reserved class of legislators may be looked upon as having been vested with political offices on account of their inherent weakness. Ultimately, however, the future role of women in our country's democratic polity depends more upon the collective political will of all concerned — political parties as well as the opinion makers.

We have introduced the Panchayati Raj system by the 74th Constitutional Amendment. This is one of the most significant steps taken by us since Independence because it provides for decentralisation of power down to grassroot level. This has significant implications for the future of democracy in our country. It is to be seen how the States are going to practise this democratic measure. After all sharing of power is as much with difficulties as access to power!

Work culture within the legislative bodies is important too. The basic mandate of the legislative bodies is for making laws, reflecting the will and problems of the people as obtaining at the grassroot level and transaction of Government business to make the governance effective. An analysis of the work transacted by the Lok Sabha since 1952 shows that over the years, the average number of sitting days per annum has been steadily coming down. In 1952-57, the number of sittings per annum was 135. However, during the period 1991-95 (upto the 15th Session during the 10th Lok Sabha), it has come down to 80. This trend would need to be reversed.

Our parliamentary democracy is based on sovereignty of the people, primacy as well as supremacy of the Legislature, responsibility of the Executive and independence of the Judiciary. In the recent Conference of Presiding Officers of the Legislative Bodies in India, I quoted President John Adams of the US to indicate how these three arms of democracy should interact with each other. The Judiciary should, of course, be independent; it should be a check on the Executive and the Legislature; and Executive and Legislature together should be a check on the Judiciary.

The future of our parliamentary democracy will be safe only if there is a coordinated operation of the classical concept of separation of powers — one arm of governance should not trespass in the area of jurisdiction of the others. The relationship should be one of mutual restraint and respect.

The Media does have a crucial role to play in the context of the future of our democracy. It interacts between the Executive and the Legislature on the one hand and the people on the other. Our Parliament does provide meaningful access to the Media to places where business is transacted and opinions are exchanged. Legislative bodies of our country are accustomed to

conservative approaches in handling the Media. These approaches could be considerably liberalised. The Media on its part should also facilitate balanced flow of parliamentary information — negative as well as the positive sides.

I have no doubt that the future of our parliamentary democracy is quite safe both because of our political heritage and because of the native genius of our people.

We should concentrate in certain crucial areas which are:

- Creating awareness amongst the voters.
- Introduction of inner party democracy in political parties.
- Streamlining processes of conduct of elections so that elections are not merely fair but also free.
- Accepting governance through coalition as a fact of life and making it work.
- Enhancing political participation of women.
- Making the Panchayati Raj system work on ground.
- Improve the work culture in legislative bodies.
- Creation of an environment where the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary will work coordinately with mutual respect and restraint.
- Interaction with the Media be such that the Media is given liberal access to information while on its part it facilitates balanced flow of information.

Thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## INSTITUTING TRUE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY\*

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Ten days from now, we will be ceremoniously commencing the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of our Independence, our Democracy. I am happy that the Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Foundation is presenting before the country notice of a Resolution for being presented to Parliament on "Instituting True People's Democracy". The effort is indeed timely. I feel honoured that I have been invited to be associated with the panel discussion on the subject of today's function.

Democracy has been variedly defined by some, out of conviction about its positive attributes; by others, out of frustration in running it. The positive definitions, of course, are that "it is a system of Government in which sovereignty is vested in the people" and it is "Government of the people, by the people and for the people". On the other extreme, we have with us Thomas Carlyle's definition of democracy, as a system of "the bludgeoning of the people, by the people and for the people". But, the best way to look at democracy is through the eyes of Winston Churchill who described it as "the worst form of Government except all those others that have been tried from time to time".

Democracy has been seen and practised differently by different people down the history of humanity. We have a wide spectrum of practices ranging from *Gram Sabha* democracy of ancient India, from City State polity of ancient Rome and Greece, to the "guided democracy" of British Conservative Party (meant for its internal working); to "people's democracy" as the system in the erstwhile Soviet Union was known; to "democratic centralism" as the Communist political system was generally known; and to "democratic socialism" of the British Labour Party and of the post-War European Socialist Parties which is in contrast to the centralist nature of Communism.

Now, the Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Foundation has come forward with a draft Resolution on 'True People's Democracy'.

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\*At the function organised by the Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Foundation on "Instituting True People's Democracy", New Delhi, (4 August 1997).

We are a country over 3 million square kilometres in extent; of a population reaching a billion mark; of people of different faiths — Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc.; of people speaking 1652 languages evolved over centuries from Negroid, Austric, Sino-Tibetan, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan and other speeches; of people whose linguistic diversity has been reckoned in terms of 18 officially recognised languages; and of people whose cultural diversity is not capable of true assessment. Pervasive through all these diversities are endless differences of castes and communities, not to speak of economic and regional divides. This multi-dimensional diversity is a fundamental challenge for running democracy in our country. If democracy is rule by respecting dissent, by consensus, by the will of the majority, one could comprehend the magnitude and complexities of this challenge in the face of our diversities.

Mahatma Gandhi understood our complexities and stipulated *Ram Rajya* as the system of governance we should opt for. What he meant was decentralised system of governance which would draw its sustenance from the grassroots, the villages and the panchayats. It took 42 years for us to adopt the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments for instituting Panchayati Raj, making it part of the basic structure of our Constitution. Earlier on, of course, Panchayati Raj has been practised with different degrees of seriousness in certain States like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, etc. The practice of Panchayati Raj has been rather halting and hesitant.

The strength of true democracy is to be seen in a proactive willingness to share political power. The framers of our Constitution were people with vision who laid down parameters for the Centre to share power with the State. They also stipulated in the Constitution local self-governance as a directive principle. The latest Constitutional Amendments have translated this directive principle on self-governance into an integral part of the Constitution itself. A large number of subjects relating to agriculture, health, education, rural industries, urban development, etc. have been listed for being vested in the three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions. What is important, however, is the basic willingness on the part of those in whose hands power is now vested to share it down the hierarchy of local self-governance. We have still not broken over from our colonial mind-set of not willing to share power. The British, for long, thought and proclaimed that India was not mature for self-governance. The same thought now prevails amongst our decision-makers and they feel that local bodies are not yet ripe for self-governance. This was evident even in the meeting of Chief Ministers held a few days back, when they were unable to come to a decision on the pace of *de facto* transfer of powers and responsibilities. First of all, we should make the practice of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments a reality on ground to achieve true democracy.

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Even if the political decision-makers are willing to truly empower the local bodies and people's institutions, the entrenched establishment of the day is offering very stiff resistance to the process. An agitation is going on even in literate and enlightened Kerala which is a small State compared to Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh against the decision of the Government to transfer officials from the existing stations to local stations. Our success in empowering people for true democracy will significantly lie in our capabilities to discipline the Establishment.

One of the interesting suggestions in the Resolution for 'True People's Democracy' is local governance, from *Gram Sabhas* and urban neighbourhood with transparent laws providing for right to information, right to consultation, right to participate in planning, right to referendum, etc. While these are certainly laudable ideals, I am not sure how practicable these suggestions are, considering the magnitude of our country. I am confident that the practicability of these suggestions will itself be a subject matter of serious debate that should necessarily follow the Resolution, on account of the serious limitations to the principles of City State polity being made applicable to a vast country like ours.

A suggestion has also been made that we should constitute a Sovereign Rights Commission. Whenever we think of transforming our society, we end up creating new structures and administrative mechanisms. Creation of new structures also results in new bureaucracies. While we want less of governance, we should consider whether creation of new structures will not mean more of it.

Of course, personal ethics, transparency, accountability, etc. should be construed as inviolable norms in governance. Personal behaviour is a matter of enlightenment. It cannot be legislated on and, indeed, we have enough laws to handle criminal behaviour. But, for inculcating enlightenment, what is needed is education and awareness creation. I have often been saying that a one-point agenda for the country should be Education.

I am grateful to the Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Foundation for having invited me to this function and permitting me to share some of my thoughts with you. I wish the Foundation all success in its innovative endeavour.

Thank you.

## PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY— A NEW VISION FOR THE FUTURE\*

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Two days from hence, we shall be having a joint midnight sitting of the Parliament on 14th–15th to commence, symbolically, the fiftieth anniversary of our Independence, our democracy. It is only appropriate that on the eve of this function, we introspect on the practice of our parliamentary democracy. This Seminar, organised by the Federation of Legislators of India in association with the All India News Paper Editors' Conference, is quite timely. I compliment the organisers. Thank you for inviting me for associating myself with the Seminar.

Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the chief architects of our democratic system, observed :

We chose this system of parliamentary democracy deliberately; we chose it not only because to some extent, we had always thought on those lines previously, but because we thought it was in keeping with our own traditions not as they were, but adjusted to the new conditions and new surroundings. We chose it also — let us give credit where credit is due — because we approved of its functioning in other countries, more especially in United Kingdom.

We have, thus, consciously opted for the parliamentary system because of our traditions and association with the British.

What is parliamentary democracy? It is simply the system in which the Head of the Government is based in, and drawn from, the Legislature itself. This is unlike in the Presidential system, like in the United States or France where the Head of the Government is elected separately and plays the role of the Head of the State as well. In the parliamentary system, the Government goes out of Office on losing confidence in the House of the People. In the Presidential system, the President is removed from Office by impeachment.

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\*At the Seminar on "Parliamentary Democracy has Exhausted itself. We need Another Vision for the New Century," New Delhi, (12 August, 1997).

The general public perception is that because of the element of precariousness of governance involved in Governments being subject to confidence in the Legislature, parliamentary democracy is less stable. The perception is also the Presidential form of Government is more stable because the President cannot be removed as in the parliamentary system and because of the rigidities of the procedure of impeachment.

Since we became independent, through the electoral process we have constituted eleven Lok Sabhas in succession. Elections to State Assemblies, in the aggregate, have resulted in a very large number of Legislative Assemblies being formed as well. The summation of it all is that democracy has survived in our country.

No doubt, pessimism and frustration spread around because of frequent changes of Government in the parliamentary system of democracy. But, if we look around the world, cutting across regions, Governments do change frequently; there are hung Parliaments and Governments are put together through coalitions. Many of the countries where politics is thus seemingly unstable, societies, economies and cultures do thrive and go on.

We, in India, since Vedic times, were accustomed to checks and balances in our political systems. Checks and balances are antidote for the tyranny of the individual and of the majority.

In assessing the performance of parliamentary democracy, what needs to be scrutinised is whether there are institutionalised mechanisms which are stable beneath the top veneer of politics. We, in India, do have such mechanisms which are meant to be, and indeed largely are, neutral to politics — the Election Commission, Civil Service, Judiciary, Planning Commission, the Audit Infrastructure, etc.

We do have problems of politicisation of institutions which are designed to be neutral. Often concern is expressed about the nexus between the politicians, businessmen, civil servants and criminals. This phenomenon is not systemic or peculiar to parliamentary democracy as a form of Government. It is rather to be traced to deep seated societal malaise. The Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, which met in October, 1996, went into this question and came to the finding that the root cause of the malaise is in the electorate itself. It called upon the people themselves to return to Office persons with a track record for public service and for probity in public life. Indeed, we have seen through fifty years of our democratic life, and we do have today also, persons with such qualities in abundant measure.

We have also had, as part of parliamentary democratic experience, success stories in coalition Governments — in Kerala and West Bengal. These two States have proved again and again that political stability is feasible even with hung Legislatures. How has this been feasible? The answer is to be found in the establishment of certain practices. Political parties, on a realistic assessment of their relative strength and of the proximity — if not identity — of their political ideologies, have articulated mutually acceptable manifestoes, formed pre-electoral alliances and run for Office. Having mustered majority together, they have equitably shared the Offices and run the Government, drawing strength from effective coordination mechanisms designed for conflict resolution.

Right now, we are having a coalition Government at the Centre of thirteen political parties. It has survived for over a year. It has witnessed change of a Prime Minister and formation and splitting of parties in the Parliament. Of course, the public perception about these developments has been a matter of concern but, as Presiding Officer of the Lok Sabha during this period, I can assure you that cutting across all political parties, including the Opposition, there has been an underlying inclination to keep the system going to the extent feasible, in the larger interests of the people.

What is ultimately required is the will of the people to make the system work, whatever be the form of democracy — parliamentary or Presidential. Indeed, the abuse of authority or betrayal of peoples' mandate could be more intense if, in a society like ours where — in the name of stability — power gets to be vested in capricious individuals. The tyranny of the individual could be more disastrous than that of the majority.

Our political life since Independence has also been replete with instances of large scale public resentment in Governors, during spells of President's Rule, being authoritarian and politicized. Indeed, the entire controversy of the application of Article 356 stems from disruption, though temporary, of parliamentary life.

Everybody is aware of the saying "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". No form of Government is an exception to this saying. In view of this, circumstances do arise when those in governance have to be removed quickly and with flexibility. The parliamentary form does provide this flexibility. Through two centuries of American history, more than fifty impeachments were instituted and only about seven of them reached the Senate. The process of impeachment is also long and tortuous. The famous impeachment of Warren Hastings, former Governor-General of India, before the House of Lords at the end of the 18th century involved a seven-year trial.

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When President Andrew Johnson of the United States was sought to be impeached at the end of the 19th century, it was stated "like an aching truth, everyone is impatient to have the old villain out" but Johnson replied, "Let them impeach and be damned".

Exhaustion means wearing out. Democracy, including parliamentary democracy, is not something in the nature of an engine, the working fluid of which drains out. Running pluralistic India is not easy. Parliamentary democracy in our polity has done reasonably well. Let us not be messiahs of pessimism and doom.

With these words, I have great pleasure in initiating the Seminar discussion. On the eve of the Golden Jubilee of our Independence, let us resolve that we shall make our parliamentary democracy work, work better.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## PROMOTING WHOLESOME PARLIAMENTARY CULTURE\*

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I am pleased and honoured to participate in the inaugural of this Seminar for the Secretaries of the Legislatures of the Asia Region. The Seminar is indeed consistent with the mission of the CPA, namely, promotion of knowledge and understanding about parliamentary democracy among its members. Secretaries of Legislatures are very crucial functionaries. Training them and exposing them to an exercise in sharing of experiences in a Seminar like this is a significant and effective way of fulfilling the CPA mission. Let me compliment the CPA and the West Bengal Branch of the Association in organising this Seminar programme. Earlier this year, in the month of April, the CPA conducted a Regional Conference at Kohima, Nagaland, for the legislators of the North-East of our country. Repeated programmes of this nature signify the importance that the CPA assigns to the Asia Region in general and India in particular.

The subjects of the Seminar, I find, are rather wide ranging and include parliamentary culture, the concept of parliamentary privileges, accountability, administration, management, modernisation of services, etc.

Parliamentary culture is a broad expression in which several aspects of representative democracy are subsumed. Parliament reflects people's power. We follow the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. Oliver Cromwell's victory in the English Civil War created an all powerful image for the Parliament. The Earl of Pembroke declared in 1648, I quote, "A Parliament can do anything but make a man a woman and a woman a man" (unquote). The primacy as well as the supremacy of the Parliament in democratic governance, according to me, are fundamental to wholesome parliamentary culture. Along with the Executive and the Judiciary, the Legislature is expected to participate in governance.

How does the Legislature participate in governance? It performs its function, primarily by making laws. The laws should reflect the collective will of the people. They should reflect and be consistent with what is

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\*At the inauguration of the Seminar for Secretaries of Legislatures of the Asia Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Calcutta, (12 December, 1997).

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understood as the Common Law or Natural Law which is distinct from Statutory Law. For example, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms like Freedom of Association, Freedom of Speech, etc., are natural and axiomatic and are, therefore, construed as part and parcel of the Natural Law.

Legislatures should also perform the function of securing the accountability of the Executive. It is the job of the Executive to run the Government on a day-to-day basis. In running the Government, the Executive wields enormous powers. Decision-makers in the Executive are in the nature of guardians of public interest. But the question that has always been asked since the days of Plato and Aristotle is "who will guard the guardians". Legislatures being constituted by the representatives of the people, they are indeed to guard the guardians. This gives rise to the principle of accountability.

The Executive is expected to be accountable to the Legislatures. That is how Article 75 of India's Constitution provides that the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the House of the People. Wholesome parliamentary culture, then, is one that ensures the accountability of the Executive. There is a whole lot of procedures and mechanisms through which this accountability is sought to be ensured — the Question Hour, Calling Attention Motions, Notices on matters of public interest, Adjournment Motions, Confidence and No-Confidence Motions, etc. These are not to be seen as mere procedural rituals but very significant links in an overall design for ensuring accountability of those who wield power in the Executive.

Voting of grants for various governmental activities and monitoring of expenditure of those grants are also vital functions in the performance of which the role of Legislatures in governance is to be seen. The established mechanisms for the purpose are the Annual Financial Statements and the Finance Committees, *i.e.* the Estimates Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the Committee on Public Undertakings. There are practical limitations to parliamentary control over finance. The principal limitation is the availability of time in the House. Budget documents are invariably the creations of the Government, conditioned by availability of resources. Parliamentary debates on Budgets are normally through Cut Motions. Cut Motions are only symbolic. They are not used for the purpose of significantly reducing or enhancing the Budget. They are rather used for the purpose of drawing attention of the Government to inadequacies in policies and in implementation of policies. Nor are the Parliaments in a position to take up detailed discussions on all the Demands for Grants for sheer want of time. All of us in this gathering are only aware of the process of guillotine, details of which I don't have to go into. Committees on Estimates only give recommendations. They can only serve the purpose of broad guidelines and

perhaps for laying down priorities of expenditure. Public Accounts Committees and Committees on Public Undertakings largely perform *ex post facto* functions. It is in this background that we in India have created the system of Departmentally Related Committees which mandatorily go into detailed scrutiny of Demands for Grants, examination of Annual Reports and Performance Budgets of Ministries. This Committee System is of fairly recent origin. Nor do all State Legislatures have this system. It is worthwhile to universalise this system and further perfect its working.

The legislators themselves are accountable to the public at large. Stated differently, each parliamentarian or member of Legislative Assembly is accountable to his electors. Of course, the electors hold the parliamentarians accountable at the time of elections. This again can only be *ex post facto*. We don't have the system of recall of legislators with whom the electorate is not satisfied. Hence the *ex post facto* exercise in securing accountability of their representative by the electors. This brings us to the question of orderly conduct of business in the Houses by the parliamentarians.

The time of the Houses being limited and expensive, the parliamentarians should observe rules relating to orderly conduct of business. Cross talk, attempting to speak without being recognised by the Chair, collective efforts at attempting to draw the attention of the Chair, repetitive arguments in the course of speeches and statements in the Houses, shouting of slogans and demonstrations on the floor of the Houses, etc. are, in the ultimate analysis, serious breach of accountability of the parliamentarians to the people who return them.

Disorderly conduct of business is largely due to lack of experience on the part of the parliamentarians. In the Eleventh Lok Sabha, out of a total of 543 elected members, 284 were first timers. Many of them had not even had experience in political life at the State or sub-State level. In their anxiety to be demonstrably and perceptibly active on behalf of their electors, parliamentarians often used to indulge in disorderly conduct. Live telecasting of Parliament proceedings, they believed, perhaps, helped them in their activeness in the Parliament being seen by their electors on the television. It is yet to be seen, through the results of the next General Elections, whether the electors have really appreciated their idea of activeness in the Parliament.

Legislators, particularly the first timers, need to be trained in the Rules of Procedure of the Legislatures. This would go a long way in facilitating orderly conduct of business in the Houses. Secretaries of Legislatures, interacting with the parliamentarians as they do on day-to-day basis and having long experience, could make significant contribution in the matter of this training.

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Many parliamentarians do also look forward to significant level of information support for the purpose of discharging their duties in the Houses. In the Parliament, we have a Library and Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service. We also have a Newspaper Clipping Service. Normally, this Service makes available to the parliamentarians documents required by them within a day or two. To render this service effectively, Secretaries of Legislative Bodies should themselves undergo training. They could keep track of the highly informative publications of the CPA and bring them to the notice of the parliamentarians. They can draw on CPA's Parliamentary Information and Reference Centre (PIRC). The CPA has advanced a lot in recent times into the use of modern technology. The CPA Secretariat is now equipped with E-mail facilities. The CPA Home Page has also been established on the World Wide Web. Secretaries would also do well to access the World Wide Web and network with the CPA systems.

Independence of the Judiciary is yet another principle which is always respected in the conduct of parliamentary proceedings. Matters which are *sub judice* are not discussed in the House. Judges, as Presiding Officers of the judicial bodies, are also not discussed. All over the world, parliamentarians do complain about the so-called judicial activism. On account of developments in the judicial process like public interest litigation and litigation involving the probity and standards of people's representatives, not to speak of issues of public concern like environment protection, judicial intervention is sought by the people more than ever before. Particularly in the context of these complexities, Secretaries of Legislatures would need to be aware and be updated with developments in the area of Legislature-Judiciary interface. The inviolable principle, however, is respect for the autonomy of the Legislatures and the Judiciary in their own areas of competence. Detailed knowledge about this should always inform the advice that may be tendered by the Secretaries to their Presiding Officers.

Secretaries should also be aware of the rights of the Media *vis-a-vis* the Legislatures. In India, the Media has a constitutional right of access to parliamentary proceedings. While providing access to the Media, the officials should make the Media aware of the implications of colourable use of parliamentary information to parliamentary privileges.

Parliamentary privileges are based on the principle of avoidance of molestation. That is, the parliamentarians should be in a position to discharge their parliamentary functions without let or hindrance. Anything and everything stated in the House or any factum of voting in the House cannot be questioned in a Court of Law. For the parliamentarians to claim privilege, there should be clear nexus between their work in the Parliament and the

alleged breach of privilege. Privileges can be claimed only in the realm of Civil Law. Criminal actions can never be the basis for claim of privileges and immunities. Most importantly, all over the world, people do not take kindly to the abuse of privileges and immunities. These are basic facts and principles which should always inform the Secretaries in their work. I am sure that this Seminar with its fairly comprehensive Agenda is going to be highly rewarding and enlightening for the participants. I wish the Seminar all success.

Thank you for this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on the Seminar subjects with you. Thank you too for your kind attention.

## COALITION GOVERNMENTS— PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES\*

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I have great pleasure in attending this Seminar on “Coalition Governments — Problems and Perspectives” organised by the C. Achyutha Menon Foundation.

We have modelled our governance on the British parliamentary system. In Britain, parliamentary democracy is essentially based on a two-party system as it evolved since the latter half of the 17th century. It has come to be accepted in Britain, over the years, that the route to the formation of Government is gaining majority of seats in the House of Commons. The party which gains this majority forms the Government and the other party forms the Opposition. Under this time honoured practice, the British parties have been disciplined and coherent institutions. The majority party sustains the Government in office. The minority accepts it and plays the role of the constructive critic of the Government policies; it bids for its time until the next election in the hope that it could emerge as the majority party by presenting an alternative programme for the people. There have no doubt been occasions when, in Britain, no party could gain overall majority in the House of Commons. In such situations, two or more parties commanding a majority in terms of their combined strength, could form a Coalition Government. Or, the single largest party may form the Government and hold office so long as other parties are not in a position to come together and defeat it.

While in India also these parliamentary practices have come to be followed, the difference is that we have a multi-party system, whether it be at the Union or the State levels.

We have had our own experiences of governance through coalitions at the Central and State levels. The Janata Party Government of 1977 was, in substance, a Coalition Government. Though the Janata Party had the external

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\*At the Seminar on “Coalition Governments—Problems and Perspectives,” organised by the C. Achyutha Menon Foundation, Thiruvananthapuram, (3 October, 1996).

trappings of a single entity, its content was a coalition of several elements—the BLD of Shri Charan Singh, socialists of different persuasions, the Jan Sangh and different break-away fragments of Indira Congress. In 1989, we had the National Front-BJP coalition with the TDP and AGP sharing power. Now we have the 13-party coalition with Shri Deve Gowda of Janata Dal as Prime Minister. In between, we have had the short-lived minority Government of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar with Congress (I) support from outside in 1991 and the largest single party Government of the BJP during this year which lasted for 13 days. Since 1977, at the level of the States, we have had as many as 40 coalitions. The coalitions have, by and large, been short-lived excepting in the case of the comparatively longer-lived coalitions of Kerala and West Bengal.

What are the factors leading to coalitions in the Indian context? They are the same as the reasons underlying the emergence of multi-party system. These reasons are:

- “India herself is a coalition”. (This is an expression used by Shri V.P. Singh. The reference is to the pluralistic society of our country)
- Ideological differences. (While a broad underlying dichotomy is there between left and right ideologies, even the left ideologies are significantly a fragmented lot. That is how we have CPI (M), the CPI, the RSP, and other Socialist Parties of various orientations. Congress (I) also has had strong Socialist moorings historically. Of course, the BJP is there with its strong conservative orientation)
- Emergence of regional aspirations. (Examples are DMK, AIADMK, MDMK, TDP, AGP, Akali Dal, HVP, Kerala Congress, Karnataka Congress, etc.)
- Strong personality orientation of groups of people. (Strong political leaders have come to float their own parties)
- The caste and communal divide and emergence of parties based on it.
- Mixture of politics and religion.
- Factional politics, often triggered by revolt against central leadership of parties.

Elections fought by this multitude of parties has tended, of late particularly, to have resulted in hung Parliaments. The 9th, 10th and 11th parliamentary elections failed to give any single party a clear majority. The V.P. Singh Government fell within 11 months. The Narasimha Rao Government, despite survival for a full term, having commenced without a majority, was crisis ridden all along. The average life of the 40 Coalition Governments at the level of the States since 1977 was only 26 months.

A close look at the history of Governments since the first elections would reflect that till about the late 60s, by and large, the national parties were forming Governments. Thereafter, till about the late 70s, regional parties became strong in the governance of the States while national parties were at the helm at the Centre. Thereafter, regional parties started having partnership in Government at the Centre as well. The 11th General Elections have brought regional parties to power at the Centre with national parties outside Government.

Why is it that Coalition Governments have tended to be short-lived? Firstly, when hung Legislatures are returned, parties are not prepared to face fresh elections immediately. There is an urge to avoid elections at least for some time. Secondly, adherence to principles of collective responsibility in a Coalition Government becomes difficult. Members of Cabinet, belonging as they do, to different parties and disparate interests, take discordant positions on issues before Government. Thirdly, the Ministers, in order to demonstrate their autonomy to their constituents, take public postures not conducive to coalition stability. Fourthly, in coalitions, the Chief Ministers and Prime Ministers are often driven to functioning less autonomously than under single party rule. This is because of the pressure built up by even comparatively smaller constituents of coalitions. Fifthly, in the federal set-up that India is, often, the interests of a party in a coalition at the Centre may be inconsistent with its interests in the Government of a State. This brings local party leaders into conflict with their leaders at the Centre. In such circumstances, for the local leadership of a party, it becomes a matter of sleeping with the enemy, in the interests of sustaining a coalition at the Centre. Lastly, parties co-operating at the Central level in a coalition could find it difficult to compromise their economic interests at the State levels. A typical example is the position of the Janata Dal and the DMK at the Centre, *vis-a-vis* their positions in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, in the matter of sharing the Cauvery and Krishna waters.

Coalition Governments to be successful, should have a common minimum programme, which would reflect *the highest common measure of agreement* on basic policy issues as between parties in partnership. Ideally, such a programme should be agreed upon before the elections. Elections fought on that basis would give greater credibility to the coalition of such parties in the event of their coming to power. Such a common minimum programme should at least be agreed upon after the elections are over, but before assumption of office. Otherwise, the coalition might be seen by the people as opportunistic and, therefore, is likely to lose its credibility.

In the implementation of the common minimum programme, there should be fair consultations before decisions are taken at the government level, on individual matters of policy and matters of public importance.

There must be institutionalised arrangements for consultations among the coalition partners. One of the reasons for a comparatively greater degree of success in governance through coalitions in Kerala has been the institution of Co-ordination Committees, Liaison Committees, etc. consisting of top level functionaries from the coalition partners.

There would need to be a certain operational elegance in the process of consultation even if the co-ordination mechanisms exist. The history of coalitions in Kerala is replete with instances of comparatively smaller partners complaining of "Big Brother attitude" of larger coalition partners.

Distribution of portfolios amongst Ministers of different parties in a coalition and distribution of other offices in the Legislature as well as the Executive amongst the coalition partners in proportion to their relative strength would be needed for a successful coalition. Governance is a matter of sharing power. Sharing is more difficult in a coalition than in a single-party Government. Particularly because of this, sharing of offices should be based on equitable principles.

The success of a coalition, to a significant extent, will be dependent on the man who leads it. By his stature, conduct and approaches of the leader, all members of the coalition should get to feel that they are partners in meaningful sustenance of Government rather than warring sharers of the spoils of offices.

A multi-party system is reflective of a basic and strong exercise of the fundamental Freedom of Association. It is a fact of life that such a system will spawn Coalition Governments. Coalitions are the order of the day in many true democracies. Even in the United States, a Democratic Presidency and Republican Congress, in essence, make a coalition. Well co-ordinated coalitions could lead to truly representative and good governance. We, in India, have had fairly significant experience in governance through coalitions. The successful examples are, as I have already stated, the Kerala and West Bengal models. We should perfect our own brand of coalition which would provide political stability basically needed for the socio-economic development of our people. If need arises, there could be coalitions even of all political parties. I will not be surprised if, someday, that becomes a reality.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## GOVERNANCE THROUGH COALITIONS\*

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I feel honoured to have been invited by the Oxford and Cambridge Society of India to give a talk on “The Speaker and Governance through Coalitions”.

Governance, simply stated, is management — management of society. In democratic societies, governance is arranged through popular elections. In the conduct of elections, the electorate is organized by political parties. The electorate is but a reflection of the society. If the society is pluralistic, the electorate also gets organized on a pluralistic basis. A multiplicity of political parties emerge. In a multiple party system, popular votes in elections tend to get divided. Often, no single party gets returned with outright majority. The phenomenon of hung legislative bodies occurs. Like minded political parties come together and accept governance through coalitions. India is a pluralistic society — more accurately, a heterogeneous society of nearly a billion people, over 1600 languages, of multiple religious persuasions, of variegated ethnicities and of an incredible number of castes, communities and cultures. This heterogeneity manifests itself in political life. Indeed, the country is a natural candidate for governance through coalitions. As the former Prime Minister V.P. Singh said, “India herself is a coalition”.

India, in her attitude to coalitions, has marked a departure from the general British tradition of bi-party system though she has substantially adopted the Westminster style of parliamentary democracy. In the British system, the party securing outright majority forms the Government and the other party bides for its time, settling down for the moment to remaining in the Opposition and “shadowing” the activities of the Government. Generally, it is not in the psyche of the two main political parties of Britain to approve of coalitions. Asquith who led a war-time coalition in Britain even observed, I quote, “Nothing is so demoralising to the tone of public life, or so belittling to the stature of public men”. (unquote).

Other countries in the world do not necessarily share the British allergy for coalitions. Rainbow coalitions exist in many countries. In many European

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\*At the programme organised by Oxford and Cambridge Society of India on “The Speaker and Governance through Coalitions”, New Delhi, (22 August, 1997).

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countries in particular, coalitions have almost become the order of the day as a means of political co-existence. Right now, cutting across the various regions of the world, about sixty out of the 135 member States of the Inter-Parliamentary Union are having coalition Governments.

India has been familiar with coalitions as an idea and as a reality for long. When the Government of India Act of 1935 became a reality in 1937, Mohammed Ali Jinnah had wanted a coalition. For him, coalition was a natural way of giving a fair deal to the Muslims. But Congress won majority in Uttar Pradesh and formed the Government. Indeed, this was the origin of the two-nation concept of Jinnah. The interim Government of 1946 led by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was a coalition of the Congress, Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha and certain eminent men of the country, though the coalition formed was voluntarily sought out by the Prime Minister himself without any compulsions from his party. The first coalition since the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, was the non-Congress Government of PEPSU in 1952. Thereafter, coalitions have been in existence in different States at different times. Coalitions have been the way of life in Kerala through eleven General Elections since 1956 except once. Governance in the State has been alternatively in the hands of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Left Democratic Front (LDF). Kerala and West Bengal have also had coalitions for long spells, examples being the seven-year long coalition of Achyutha Menon in Kerala in the late sixties and early seventies and the last two-decade-long coalitions of Jyoti Basu in West Bengal. At the Centre, Morarji Desai led a virtual coalition in 1977-79 and V.P. Singh led a true one in 1989-90. Even in the small State of Meghalaya where I was Chief Minister a decade back, I led an eight-party coalition.

For a long time, no doubt, India did not widely go in for coalitions. This was largely because of the strength of the Congress Party in earlier years. Regionalism started getting assertive in the 1960s. And, the 1970s marked a watershed in Indian politics. Until then, the Congress party was in power at the Centre as well as in most of the States. Thereafter, the Opposition parties gained in strength everywhere. Since 1977, about 30 per cent of the Governments (40 out of 138) were Coalition Governments. The average life of these Governments was around two years.

The last single party Government at the Centre was that of Rajiv Gandhi (1984-89). Even he was highly perceptive of the inner potential of his party for fragmentation and the underlying urges in the country for coalition as an alternative even if the Congress Party could not be replaced as such by a single alternative party. Politics is, indeed, a game of cannibalism. This was apparently the reason why Rajiv Gandhi went in for the Constitution

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52nd Amendment of 1985 which added the Tenth Schedule providing for disqualification of members in circumstances of defection, though he had far more than a two-third majority (he had with him 400 out of 556 seats, a majority of 72 per cent). By then, India had had the experience of the phenomenon of what had come to be popularly known as "Aya Rams" and "Gaya Rams", an expression coined by the political world to refer to floor crossing legislators who could reduce even road roller majorities into miniscule minorities.

The last three General Elections yielded only hung Parliaments and there have been five minority Governments. (The Narasimha Rao Government also started as a minority Government only, though it mustered majority in course of time).

Fragmented electoral verdicts are differently interpreted by different players in the political game. The verdict of 1996 was interpreted by some as a clear vote against the former Government. Some others interpreted it as a negative verdict against all political parties. Yet others saw in it a popular mandate for governance through coalition.

One of the eloquent and articulate members of the Lok Sabha even frolicked in the House recently on the present status of the United Front coalition at the Centre by referring to the incredible political equilibrium based on some parties remaining in the Front and participating in the Government; some others remaining in the Front and supporting the Government without participating in it; yet others remaining neither in the Front nor participating in it but supporting it from outside, the strength of parties in actual governance being inversely proportionate to that of parties extending support from outside or in the Opposition. But the system has worked for more than a year now, despite different kinds of public perception. One perception is that the present arrangement is perfectly legitimate, being based on a Common Minimum Programme (CMP), "issue based support", etc. Yet another perception is, indeed, that those who give support from outside should participate in Government lest they expose themselves to allegations of wielding power without responsibility and of being extra constitutional forces, implementing their own agenda by taking recourse to "back seat driving". Years back, when Chief Minister Karunakaran took pride in his United Democratic Front (UDF) coalition in Kerala as being based on a Minimum Programme amongst partners, his political opponent and the veteran Marxist Communist Party leader, E.M.S. Namboodiripad cynically dismissed his pride and characterised the Minimum Programme of his partners as one of sticking to the chair.

But the fact of today's political life at the Centre, as I have been frequently observing, is that it has been enveloped by a sea-change. In earlier years, at the Centre, national parties used to be in power, with regional parties in the Opposition. Now, there has been a role reversal and regional parties are in power.

The dynamics of coalition forces would deserve some articulation. These forces largely are :

- General societal heterogeneity already mentioned and the federal nature of the polity.
- Ideological differences.
- Articulation of specific regional aspirations by specific groups of people by formation of a multiplicity of parties.
- Strong personality orientation resulting in strong and charismatic leaders floating their own political parties.
- Factional politics even within individual parties, often even leading to revolt against Central leadership.

Government formation in circumstances of hung Parliaments is, indeed, a very sensitive and complex matter. This has come to be investigated in detail by Justice Sarkaria. His prescriptions are the following :

- The party or combination of parties which commands the widest support in the Legislature should be called upon to form the Government.
- If there is a single party with an absolute majority in the Assembly, the Leader of the party should automatically be asked to form the Government.
- If there is no such party, the following parties or groups of parties should be sounded on the formation of Government in turn in the order of preference indicated below :
  - An alliance of parties that was formed prior to the elections.
  - The largest single party staking a claim to form the Government with the support of others, including Independents.
  - A post-electoral coalition of parties with all the partners in the coalition joining the Government.
  - A post-electoral alliance of parties with some of the parties in the alliance forming a Government and remaining parties, including Independents, supporting the Government from outside.

These are, of course, in the nature of guidelines and the President of India or the State Governor, as the case may be, may have to consider merits of each case and circumstances and take appropriate decisions. Practices should lead to precedents which in turn should evolve into further fine tuned practices.

There have been suggestions that where in circumstances of hung Parliament, political parties are not in a position to come together to form the Government, the Speaker could take the lead role and ask the House to elect a Prime Minister who could subsequently be appointed by the President. In the Swedish Riksdag, the Speaker performs a role in this regard. However, in the Indian context, exercise of this function by the Speaker may detract from the non-partisan nature of his Office and avoidably politicise it.

The practice of coalition politics in India has, no doubt, projected several weaknesses:

- The Prime Minister cannot exercise the prerogative of choosing his team of Ministers without inhibitions. The coalition partners have a decisive say in regard to the choice of Ministers as well as their portfolios. As the members of the Oxford and Cambridge Society would certainly know, the status of the Prime Minister is only one of *primus inter pares*. Even Winston Churchill bemoaned, I quote, "Headmasters have powers at their discretion with which Prime Ministers have never yet been invested". In a Coalition Government, particularly in our context, the status of the Prime Minister comes under considerable strain. Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers are driven to functioning less autonomously than under single party rule because of pressures even from comparatively smaller coalition constituents. Particularly when coalitions have a rather slender majority, the case becomes one of the tail wagging the dog. This has serious implications for decision-making in Government which, in turn, manifests itself in the business of the Parliament.
- The interests of a party in a coalition at the Centre could be inconsistent with its interests in a State. This results in conflict between national level leadership of the party and State level party functionaries and even the rank and file. For the latter it becomes a case of sleeping with the enemy.
- Inability of the coalition partners to claim credit for achievements individually with the ease with which they shift responsibility on one another for failures, particularly at the time of elections.

- Coalition partners cooperating at the Central level may find themselves at logger heads at the State level in regard to certain economic issues. A typical example is the clash of interests between the DMK and the Janata Dal in regard to sharing of Cauvery waters even though they are partners in the United Front coalition at present.

There is a school of thought in India represented by leaders like Mr. Vasant Sathe according to which governance through coalition is not consistent with the dire need for political stability in the country, nor even with the unity and integrity of the nation. Mr. Sathe believes that the President of India already has a wider popular mandate than the Prime Minister, even though the election of the President is indirect; and that with very minimal amendments to the Constitution, we can opt for the Presidential form of Government to provide political stability to the national polity. Personally, however, I would feel that we need not run away from coalitions and that the parliamentary system is preferable because of the checks and balances involved in it. We can ill-afford, in the Indian context, the rigidities of a Presidential form of governance in the name of political stability. Personality orientation being rather strong in the Indian society, the Presidential form could lead to fascist tendencies.

Governance through coalition does have implications for the conduct of business in the Parliament and for the Office of the Speaker. As already stated, the status of the head of the Government as *primus inter pares* is under invasion. And Ministers of Cabinet, belonging as they do to different parties and disparate interests, take discordant positions without being contained by the discipline of the Cabinet form of Government. To be demonstrable about their autonomy and to satisfy their constituents and field formations, they tend to take public postures not conducive to coherence of coalition. This militates against collective responsibility. Under Article 75 of the Constitution, the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. Where Ministers representing different political parties in the Government are not able to harmonise their interests and concerns, it detracts from cohesiveness in governance and the Speaker will have to remind the Government of the need for conformity with the principle of collective responsibility which otherwise becomes a casualty.

In a coalition set-up, decision-making even on legislative matters often gets inordinately delayed. The powers of the Speaker under Rule 388 of the Rules of Procedure of the House are frequently invoked for the purpose of dispensing with forty-eight hour notice for consideration of Bills. And, if the dispensation is given, naturally, the members are denied the opportunity of

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preliminary scrutiny of the legislative proposals of the Government. The Speaker's powers in regard to suspension of Rules being discretionary in nature, their exercise should be sparing, lest it becomes indiscriminate and arbitrary.

If the coalition is significantly of regional parties, often local issues within the purview of the jurisdiction of States tend to get raised in the House proceedings much against the Rules of Procedure, bringing the Speaker under avoidable strain. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh issues, for example, came to be raised with obsessive repetition, particularly in the Monsoon Session of the House this year.

Floor management in the House on behalf of the Government is essentially the function of the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. The internal dynamics of coalitions tend to drive the coalition partners to the Speaker whose good offices are often sought by them in this regard. It is not desirable that the floor management function even of minor varieties and subtle forms are shifted to the Speaker.

The competing claims before the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of different coalition partners for the time of the House to transact Government business call for the special skills of the Speaker in conflict resolution.

Sometimes, internal differences and perceptions on even listed business of the Government do not get fully resolved in advance among the coalition partners and tend to surface on the floor of the House as it has happened recently in the case of the Constitution Eighty-first Amendment regarding reservation of seats for women in legislative bodies. It is needless to say that situations of this kind do detract from orderly conduct of the business of the House which is the prime function of the Speaker.

This is the Golden Jubilee Year of our Independence and democracy. Fifty years is too short a time to firmly establish the niceties and sophistication of democratic governance in the sub-continent that we are. Even in Britain where the supremacy of Parliament was established 200 years back, niceties of Government are still evolving. Politics is always dynamic. The only permanent thing about it is change. What is important to realise about ourselves is that we are a truly democratic and open society. The world recognises this. We need not run away from, or feel apprehensive about, governance through coalitions. We can make a success of this form of governance by experience already gained and yet to be gained. Some of the suggestions I could make in this regard are : Let us examine how coalitions have been successful in Kerala and West Bengal. Negative lessons therein, if any, can also be learnt to avoid pitfalls in the future. May be, pre-electoral

alliances could be struck as a precursor for formation of coalitions after the elections to carry credibility with the public. Such coalitions could be based on a *highest common measure of agreement* amongst partners on policy issues. Coordination arrangements among coalition partners could be institutionalised, by whatever name they could be called — Steering Committees, Liaison Committees, Coordination Committees, etc. The consultation processes in such institutionalised mechanisms could be sustained and subject to civilised ground rules. Sharing of offices between the coalition partners could be equitable. Above all else, even as Justice Sarkaria specifically noted, the individual chosen to lead the coalition is to be a person of stature, experience and credible standing with the public.

Let me now conclude, and repeat that I am honoured in having been asked to deliver this talk.

Thank you for your attention.

## ELECTORAL REFORM—AN UNCEASING PROCESS\*

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I am very pleased in having been invited to deliver this Lecture on electoral reforms in memory of late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. She was a strong believer in building political parties and I had the privilege of building the Congress Party in the North-East under her leadership.

Electoral reform is a vast subject. This is also a subject which has been gone into by a Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1971, by the Tarkunde Committee in 1974 and the Goswami Committee in 1990. In 1994, a Committee headed by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer made certain recommendations. Proposals for electoral reforms have also been made by the Election Commission. So far no significant changes have been brought about. I shall deal with certain important aspects of electoral reform and would desist from making specific suggestions because, as Speaker, it may not be appropriate, particularly during pre-election time to offer opinions or solutions.

The Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Lok Sabhas have been hung Houses. So, the period from 1989 to 1997 has been a period of political uncertainty. There have been six Prime Ministers. Our system, which is based on institutions like a neutral Civil Service, independent Election Commission and Judiciary, Planning Commission, Finance Commission, and a large number of national organisations in every field of development as well as the economy, no doubt, is basically sound and stable. But frequent change of Governments does slow down the pace of development and national progress, as decision-making at policy levels receives a setback. How do we bring about stability in governance? There is a school of thought that we should go in for the Presidential form of Government. Those who support the Presidential form argue that even under the relevant provisions of our present Constitution, the President has popular endorsement of a higher order than even the Prime Minister. The specific argument presented is that under Article 54 of

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\*Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture on 'Electoral Reform, Parliamentary Practice and Role of Speaker', New Delhi, (17 December, 1997).

the Constitution, the President is elected by the elected members of both Houses of Parliament and the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States, while the Prime Minister is normally the Leader of the House of the People who is appointed by the President.

Will the Presidential form be really a solution to the problem of instability or stagnation in governance? Or, will the option of Presidential form amount only to replacement of one problem by another?

We had a single-member Election Commission. Now, we have switched over to a multi-member Commission, obviously because it was felt that it would be desirable, going by the nature of the functions to be performed by the Commission, that perhaps it should not be left to be headed by a single person. The merits and demerits of the multi-member Commission would get projected only over a period of years.

In Bangladesh, the people started with the parliamentary form in 1972, switched over to Presidential form in 1975 and reverted to parliamentary form in 1986.

In Sri Lanka, having tried parliamentary form in 1948, people adopted the Presidential form in 1975. There have since been talks of going back to the parliamentary system.

In the Fourth Republic of France, within a period of about a dozen years between 1945 and 1958, twenty-five Governments came in and went out of power because of fractured party systems. Post-War Italy also has faced this problem. There were more than fifty Governments between 1945 and 1996 because of polarisation in their multi-party system. Nevertheless, in Italy, changes in Government did not mean anything more than reshuffling of ministerial functionaries. Only occasionally was the country landed in general elections.

Whatever be the form of Government, ultimately what counts is really the collective will of the people to make the system work. If, after fifty years of experience with parliamentary democracy, we feel that the system does not work as it should, how can we be confident that the Presidential system will work and will not present problems?

The vast pluralistic sub-continent that India is, the framers of our Constitution had obviously felt that the system of the Executive holding office at the pleasure of the people's Chamber was most suited for us.

Nor is the Presidential system of Government without its problems. In a sense, in the Presidential form, the President proposes and the Congress disposes. There can be deadlocks between the President and the Congress,

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when the White House and Capitol Hill are controlled by rival political parties as is the situation now. President Clinton's Democrats are in a minority in the Senate as well as in the House of Representatives. Such rival deadlocks can occur even when the same party controls the Presidency and the Congress, if there are conflicts and dissensions internally within the same party. Indeed, during President Jimmy Carter's days, such situations did obtain.

Whether it is Presidential or parliamentary form of Government, in the ultimate analysis, the issue is one of political cohabitation. That is, political parties should learn to sail together, identify the highest common measure of agreement, or at least the lowest common measure of disagreement.

The orthodox principle of parliamentary democracy is that the Government is voted out of Office by the People's Chamber. What happened in the Eleventh Lok Sabha is that the House has been packed off by the Government. Of course, it was the Presidential Order of dissolution that terminated the House but that was again ultimately on the recommendation of the Government which had already resigned, having come to realise that on the floor it would not be in a position to demonstrate its majority.

Article 75 of the Constitution only says that the Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President. How the President shall appoint the Prime Minister is not spelt out. In regard to modalities of appointment of the Prime Minister, we always fall back on British practices and suggestions given by the Sarkaria Commission. In regard to this matter, seemingly, what the Constitution does not say is more important than what it says. Obviously the framers of our Constitution had not thought it wise or practicable to fetter the hands of the President in the matter of modalities of appointment of the Prime Minister. They had expected the President to play by the ear depending on what each set of circumstances would warrant. A Parliamentary Delegation that had come from Iraq to New Delhi around the time of dissolution of the Eleventh Lok Sabha even enquired why the President could not keep the premiership with himself, if he had prerogatives in the matter of appointment of the Prime Minister! One of the options suggested in some quarters as available to the President before dissolving the Lok Sabha was to direct the House itself to elect the Prime Minister.

Indeed, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, in the course of deliberations in the Constituent Assembly, had stated that it cannot be given to every Prime Minister going out through the revolving door to get dissolution of the House and election on the people imposed as they would like.

There are quite a few countries, including Japan and Sweden, where the Prime Ministers are elected by the Parliament. There are certain others, where the Prime Minister is nominated by the Parliament and confirmed by the

Head of the State, like for example Ireland. And, there are yet others where the Prime Minister is nominated by the Head of the State and confirmed by the Parliament like in the cases of Belgium and Germany.

The issues relating to mid-term dissolution of the House and appointment of alternative Prime Ministers would deserve to be a subject matter of public debate so as to inform electoral reform.

Multiplication of political parties and its impact on the Parliament and governance are matters coming within the ambit of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, the so-called Anti-Defection Law. Based on the practice of party politics over the last dozen years, the ethics and propriety of this law itself has been questioned. Strong demands are being voiced now for scrapping this law. It is argued that the law puts a premium on defections, whatever might be the size of defections. In terms of principles, it is being suggested that those who have been returned on the tickets of particular parties cannot turn their backs against their parties and should face the electorate again, if they do so. The defence of defections within the framework of Anti-Defection Law is, of course, that people's representatives cannot be subjected to party dictatorship and that their fundamental freedom of association cannot be curbed without violation of natural law and justice.

A number of suggestions have also been made in regard to containment of defections such as that defectors should be denied ministerial positions and public offices for stipulated periods. There have also been suggestions that the authority to decide on disqualifications under the Anti-Defection Law should be taken away from the Speaker and vested in institutions outside the Parliament like the Election Commission or the Judiciary.

The question whether a member of Parliament should face the electorate in the event of change in party affiliation is to be seen in the context of world practices. There are basically two concepts — one of imperative mandate and another of free representation. In some countries (this was so in the case of many erstwhile socialist countries), members were elected to represent particular parts of the electorate or specific interests. Statutory provisions were made in regard to such members that they should regularly account to their electors for their personal actions as well as activities in Parliament. In certain cases, the statute further provided that the members could be recalled by the electors if there was betrayal of trust. In most countries, however, members of Parliament are not bound by such imperative mandates. The basic theory has been that once elected, a member represents the whole nation, though elected in a particular constituency. Accountability would only be in subsequent elections. Free representation, however, is not defined in any law but only flows from practice. In short, the world practice is that members getting elected in the free representation system would not lose their

parliamentary mandate by changing party affiliations. During 1970s and 80s, this issue was debated hotly in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. However, no changes were introduced in these countries. They can still change party allegiance and keep parliamentary mandate.

Criminalisation of politics is a vital issue which needs to be addressed in electoral reforms. All political parties have a consensus on elimination of criminalisation from politics. Article 102 of the Constitution dealing with the disqualification of members does not specifically spell out disqualification on grounds of criminality. *Inter alia*, it states that disqualification by or under any law made by the Parliament will invite disqualification for purposes of membership in the Parliament. The relevant law on the subject is the Representation of Peoples Act. Section 8 of the Act needs to be amended and lightened for the purpose of keeping criminals out of the Parliament. At present, a person convicted for any offence for a period of not less than two years is disqualified. The provision is also that disqualification will not take effect in the case of a sitting member of Parliament till three months have lapsed from the date of conviction and until appeal against conviction, if any, is disposed of by the competent Court. Reportedly, the Election Commission is proposing to exclude from electoral contest those who have criminal background and, for the purpose, may be insisting on appropriate affidavits from the candidates. While I am in full agreement with the need for amending the law and making it very strict to keep contestants with criminal background altogether out, I would desire that any action in this regard should not be questioned as being illegal or extra legal.

Of course, financing of elections is also an important issue coming within the purview of electoral reforms. Reportedly, some decisions are being taken at the Government level in regard to enhancement of ceiling of election expenses. One method of cutting down election expenses on a long-term basis would be to press into service the electronic media; *Doordarshan*, being in the public sector, could acquire necessary additional infrastructure for the purpose like electronic news gathering equipment. In the process, apart from facilitating access to the electors for the candidates in a cost effective manner, *Doordarshan* would also be acquiring assets.

There are certain very basic issues like change in the system of representation itself — that is, as to whether we should continue with our majoritarian system of voting or go in for some form of proportional representation. The need for reform in this area is mainly to eliminate the disproportionalities between the percentages of popular votes obtained by political parties in elections and the number of seats secured by them in the Legislatures. This subject would by itself justify a separate lecture. I would not venture into that.

I shall now conclude thanking you for your kind attention.

## TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN POLITICS—I\*

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It is a matter of great honour and pride for the Parliament of India, during this Golden Jubilee Year of India's Independence, that we are hosting this Specialised Inter-Parliamentary Conference in the cause of women.

The problem of politics in the world today is that there are far too many men in it. It was Harold Wilson who said that "a week is a long time in politics". Patently, Harold Wilson's dictum and his time scale of political values have not had application to women's struggle for political participation. More than a century seems to have been a short time for women's access to politics in equality with men. This is quite unconscionable.

Politics, in essence, is management of society which, in turn, facilitates management of governance. Women are natural managers. They can manage society and governance as well as they do the family. For, society is but an aggregate of families. Because women manage the family well, they need not be confined to it. Rather, because of this, they should be inducted into politics so that society and governance are managed better, without leaving politics to be the hunting ground for men.

And we would also do well to remember that political participation, be it of men or women, is a natural human activity, a basic human right. Aristotle's famous aphorism that "man is by nature a political animal" is equally applicable to women.

Political participation of women cannot be achieved without certain underlying concerns being addressed. These are :

- Women themselves have to be made aware of their political rights in, and political obligations to, society.
- Men should be sensitised to the unconscionable nature of gender iniquity in politics.

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\*At the inauguration of the Inter-Parliamentary Specialized Conference on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics", New Delhi, (14 February, 1997).

- Political commitment needs to be firmly established at national and international levels.
- Affirmative legal actions should flow from this political commitment.
- The legal regime of political equity has to be practised.

The themes of this Conference are “Political and Electoral Training of Women” and “Financing of Women’s Electoral Campaigns”.

Political and electoral training is a matter of education of both men and women. Even from at formative stages, academic syllabi and curricula at various levels would need to be enriched with matter on democratic systems of governance, political participation, gender equity, etc. The performance of political achievers and statesmen and stateswomen have to be projected to inspire interest in politics.

The have-nots who may not have the fortune of accessing formal education may have to be given non-formal political literacy. In fact, in many developing countries where non-formal educational programmes are under implementation, the objective has been expanded to go beyond the confines of mere literacy and numeracy to include awareness of civil and political rights.

Politics is governance at all echelons — local, provincial and national. At every one of these levels, the electorate has a different facet, reflecting different colours and dimensions of public concern. Multi-faceted policies does call for diversified experience. Whether they be men or women, it is also desirable that they are exposed to this whole hierarchy of experience at various echelons for effective political participation. It is only this depth of experience ranging from what is known as pavement politics to national politics that can provide the power base required for sustained public service. Indeed, lack of this experience, sustained public service, and power base built upon that that constitute the root causes of decadence of standards in public life. Those who attempt to access authority otherwise than through sustained public service short circuit morality in politics, shocking the society into disillusion and apathy.

Different countries have different systems of financing political campaigns — by raising resources from the electorate itself, through trade unions, from the corporate world, Government budgets, etc. There are also instances of Non-Government Organisations providing, *inter alia*, financial support for women’s political campaigns. Whatever be the modality of raising resources for meeting electoral expenses, the underlying problem again is one of providing access to funds for women on an equitable basis. This, necessarily, is also a function of political parties themselves.

Women who are new entrants to politics should keep in mind too that the route to politics is not up the garden paths. This is, of course, true for women as well. As Winston Churchill said: "Politics are as exciting as war, and quite as dangerous. In war you can be killed only once, but in politics many times". But as a very famous saying goes:

Until you have been in politics  
 You have never really been alive,  
 It is rough, and sometimes it is dirty  
 And it is always hard work and tedious details  
 But, it is the only sport for grown-ups.

And, let me add, the sport of the grown-ups is one of partnership too.

The strategies for the political empowerment of women and the role of the players to participate in the implementation of these strategies — that is, the governmental and non-governmental agencies, activists in the area of human rights and women's issues, the Media, etc. — have been extensively and intensively debated through four World Conferences on Women. The IPU has also brought out a Plan of Action for Parliamentarians. What is needed now is sustained follow-up supported by periodic stocktaking. This sustained follow-up should be in terms of concern for gender equity as a natural, involuntary and integral part of the very thinking process in every aspect of societal and governmental action. Over a period of time, affirmative action which is, in fact, a crunch should become irrelevant.

The Special Conference being inaugurated now is in the nature of a stocktaking to appraise action, following-up on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This may as well be the last major international special appraisal during the current millennium. I am sure that the power of women over men is bound to succeed. I understand that the Musical Programme being jointly presented by Mr. Dominique Barthassat, the renowned Swiss composer, and Shri Amaan Ali Bangash, the famous Indian Sarod player is going to include the *Bhoopala* tune which is associated with awakening the Almighty early in the morning. I hope that this is symbolic of a new morning and a new awakening of mankind to give women their due in the area of politics and decision-making. And I hope too that, sometime during the 21st century, the international community may not have to debate gender iniquities militating against men.

I wish this Conference all success.

Jai Hind.

## TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN POLITICS—II\*

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We have now come to the concluding part of the Conference.

The strong presence of President Sam Nujoma and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the launching of the Debate in this Conference has been a gentle message to the world community that the pace of women's political integration needs to be addressed forthwith. The gentle presence of Madam Vigdis Finnbogadottir has been a strong message for a crusade on the issue. Let us place on record our deep gratitude to the gesture of these high dignitaries.

I compliment the IPU Council for the design of this Conference. The design has been unique. The usual country statements were avoided. Delegates comprising 121 men and 119 women, belonging to 133 political parties of the world, apart from nine independents, went straight into business.

There were 150 interventions in the Plenaries alone. Seventy-five per cent of these interventions was made by women.

The quality of debate has been impressive as well. The Keynote Speakers and Moderators meaningfully guided the debate with the professionalism and enormity of their experience.

The Plenaries and the Workshops truly mirrored the grassroots conditions.

The Agenda has been practical. It was confined to one of the twelve critical areas of concern identified at Beijing in September, 1995, namely "Inequality between Men and Women in the Sharing of Power and Decision-making at all levels". Even within this concern, the Agenda was focussed on a single crucial facet — political empowerment. Training of women, funding of electoral campaigns and media management which are the themes under the Agenda are nut and bolt subjects of practical politics. They have been analysed threadbare.

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\*At the concluding session of the Inter-Parliamentary Specialized Conference on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics", New Delhi, (18 February, 1997).

Having shifted my official headquarters from Parliament to this Conference venue over the last few days, I have carefully watched the entire debate either at the floor or on the closed circuit TV monitor. I shall present to you, with my comments now, what I comprehend are some important highlights:

1. Women themselves are halting and hesitant in entering politics and consider it an unclean domain. No doubt, the word *politics* has come to acquire a derogatory connotation. But, as one of the Delegates mentioned, politics is one of the most beautiful human activities. The legitimacy of this activity has to be carried home to women.
2. Men need to be prepared for adjusting themselves to the new role they have to play as women get inducted into public service — particularly, in the context of the sea-change overtaking the institution of family. This message was strongly projected by one of the British Delegates.
3. Political participation is a pervasive process. The index of political participation is not a mere arithmetical factor of membership in national Parliaments. This fact emerged rather clearly in the presentation of Mr. Jerzy J. Wiatr, the Rapporteur of the Central and East European Regional Workshop. Political training of women needs to be continuous and life-long, even commencing from school stage; it should be at all levels too — local, provincial, national and international; academic, specialised and party institutions should be involved in the training process. Ms. Rosa Linda Miranda, one of the keynote Speakers, has even enriched the English vocabulary by describing the political training needs of women as “She-volution”.
4. Establishment of quotas for women’s political participation is legitimate and practical as proved by experience. They need to be established in the political party systems as well — in membership, hierarchies and candidatures. Quotas will, by themselves, ensure funding of women’s electoral campaigns.
5. Electoral reforms could be considered for eliminating the disadvantages faced by women in political participation. The Canadian Royal Commission on Electoral Reform (1992) is indeed exemplary.
6. There is apprehension that mobilisation of finances from private sources, that is otherwise than through State budgets, may create dependence and obligations. Candidates could get involved in

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scams and scandals. This is an occupational hazard. Indeed, the politician has even been defined as a person who divides his time between running for office and running for cover. The only solution to the issue of private funding is transparency in mobilisation of funds, expenditure and accounting for it.

7. There is more to success in political campaigns and electoral contests than financial resources and support. Indeed, be it men or women, people do spend money and still lose elections. Ultimately, success in elections is a function of identification with the majority of the voters and their concerns. The route to this identification is sheer leg-work — the hard grind of sustained and uninterrupted public service in the constituencies, commencing long earlier than announcement of candidatures. As Madam Sheila Finestone put it, if money is not available, “other creative ways” have to be found.
8. The Media’s role, as it has emerged in the Media Round Table, has been traditionally one of reflecting some striking aspects of the *status quo* and trends. Hence, it has been playing a rather passive role in projecting the political aspirations and concerns of women. If the Media is to play an active role, women themselves should devise direct and institutional mechanisms for networking with the Media. This is not to say that the Media should not proactively campaign the cause of women’s political integration. The human resource in the Media is but a part of the society which is largely male-dominated all over the world. Hence, the need as well for proactive initiatives by the Media.
9. The IPU should continue to survey the status of political advancement of women, monitor it and promote it. There needs to be a Summit of Heads of Government on political participation of women. Heads of Government have met only recently at Copenhagen in the World Summit for Social Development and they have stood by empowerment of women. Hence, it is unclear whether on this limited subject of women’s political participation, there could be yet another Summit. Personally, I am for it. Candidly speaking, politics is power and perquisites as well, apart from public service. Men, who are in majority in politics, could be reluctant to be deprived. If this scenario is to change, political commitment should follow from the Heads of Government. Or, is there a way of including women without depriving men? Can there be a male and a female candidate from each constituency? The debate has to continue. And, the dynamics of democracy is one of constant vigil for its refinement and continuance.

Let me now place on record, on behalf of all of you, our gratitude to the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister of India for contributing their thoughts, apart from lending the majesty of their Offices and grandeur of their personalities to this historic Conference.

The United Nations has conveyed its solidarity with us in this Conference by deputing Ms. Angela King, its Assistant Secretary-General, as an emissary of the Secretary-General. Her Statement was thought-provoking.

Dr. Ahmad Fathy Sorour, the President of the IPU Council, was always by my side in giving his sage advice. I compliment him. I have found in Mr. Haarde, the Vice-President of the IPU, a special friend of quiet efficiency. My special thanks to him.

Mrs. Faiza Kefi, President of the IPU Co-ordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, gave stimulating food for thought in her introductory observations. She demonstrated touching sincerity in her commitment to the deliberations of the Conference despite her sudden indisposition. My special thanks to her as well.

All the officials of the IPU Secretariat under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Cornillon, the Secretary-General of the IPU and Ms. Christene Pintat, the Secretary of the Conference, virtually worked round the clock. I am grateful to them. The IPU staff and the Delegates have appreciated the phenomenal dedication of the Indian Parliament Staff. I am proud of them.

The moving spirit for this Conference has been Dr. (Mrs.) Najma Heptulla, my colleague in the Parliament, who has demonstrated what partnership is in this Conference. Hon'ble Mr. Suraj Bhan, Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and senior parliamentarians of India lent their quiet and full support to me. If this Conference has been successful, it is due to the implicit faith and confidence they have had in me and Mrs. Heptulla.

I thank the Media for their cooperation in the Conference and I appeal to them to be proactive as well in the cause of vesting political power in women.

I have got my formal concluding Statement on the outcome of the Conference elaborately prepared in consultation with the Keynote Speakers and Moderators, duly assisted by the IPU Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Indian Parliament. I shall now call upon Ms. Christene Pintat, Secretary of the Conference to read out my Statement.

Thank you.

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT— A NATIONAL COMMITMENT\*

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I am happy to be here today amidst you.

As a nation, we stand committed to the empowerment of women. Empowerment is a rather comprehensive expression. It means overall upgradation of the status of women in society. Upgradation is needed because, the world over, women are a discriminated lot — whether it be in household or places of work or society in general. Every element of discrimination needs to be identified and eliminated. Otherwise, empowerment is not feasible.

Our Constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex. As a Member State of the United Nations, we have contributed to formulation of international instruments to prohibit discrimination — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Political Rights of Women, International Covenants of Civil and Political Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, etc.

We also have a regime of laws to deal with the problem of discrimination touching upon various aspects like succession to property, equal remuneration, etc. We have also contributed to shaping world opinion in regard to empowerment of women by active participation in the four World Conferences on Women.

As parliamentarians, we have projected women's concerns through the Inter-Parliamentary Union. As all of you are aware, we hosted in February 1997 a special Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Partnership between Men and Women in Politics.

We have brought about amendments to the Constitution to provide mandatory 1/3rd representation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is common knowledge that about a million women are holding decision-making positions in local bodies. Now, we have before us the 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill on which Report has been given by the Joint Committee of Parliament headed by Smt. Geeta Mukherjee.

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\*At the inauguration of the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women, New Delhi, (6 May, 1997).

Our problem, whatever be the area, is not lack of legislation. We are indeed an over-legislated country. The problem is one of social and political commitments to implement the laws. It is for us the parliamentarians to generate political commitment. It is for us, as women and men in public service, to create social awareness.

We have established the National Commission for Women. The interface between the Parliamentary Committee and the National Commission has to be worked out smoothly. This interface should be established in a spirit of cooperation and complementarity. Being a Parliamentary Committee, this new mechanism is at once national, members representing different parts of India. It is popular, members having the general popular mandate. This is what differentiates it from the National Commission.

The members of the Committee would need to become specialists on all issues relating to women — those relating to societal attitudes, local peculiarities, legal status, access to education, employment, income, wealth, property, political rights, etc.

Affirmative action to specially discriminate in favour of women has been held to be legally sustainable at the national and international levels. However, there is a school of thought in the world that holds that affirmative action perpetuates itself as it is in the nature of a prop.

In this context, what is needed is training of women to gain upgraded status over a period of time by their own merit, rendering affirmative action itself needless.

I do not intend to inflict a long winded speech on you, because, by your own right, you are veterans. I should not carry coal to Newcastle. I shall stop now, wishing that this Committee on Empowerment be by itself truly powerful. If only women unite, nothing is impossible.

Thank you.

## DEMOCRACY AND TERRORISM\*

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The then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali, in his Statement at the opening of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June, 1993 observed: "Not a day goes by without scenes of warfare or famine, arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, murder, expulsion, transfer of population and ethnic cleansing, not a day goes by without reports of attacks on the most fundamental freedoms,.....without reminders of racism and the crimes it spawns, intolerance and the excesses it breeds, underdevelopment and the ravages it causes."

This situation obtains because of denial of the basic human right which is the right to life. The 20th century has witnessed violation of this right more than any time before in the history of mankind. Two World Wars have been fought; during the Second World War, atomic bombing has been taken recourse to with massive devastation of civilian population. There have been genocides, insurgency, counter-insurgency as well as civil wars and terrorist movements. It will not be an exaggeration even to say that more human blood has been spilt because of all this during the present century than during all the previous millennia put together.

It is in this perspective that terrorism should be viewed and understood. Terrorism is a social disease. Democracy is its remedy. This disease-remedy relationship would become clear if the manifestations and causes of terrorism are gone into.

More than one billion people of the world, that is, more than 20 per cent of world population, live below the poverty line. Economic growth and wealth generation have not kept pace with distribution. The international concern of the day is jobless growth and iniquities and consequent social and economic exclusion of vast sections of societies. This exclusion is a ready-made breeding ground for terrorism. This is the reason why the United Nations, while celebrating its fifty years of service to humanity, organised the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995, setting out its theme as reduction of poverty, employment creation and social integration.

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\*Valedictory Address at the International Conversazione on "Democracy and Terrorism", New Delhi, (26 July, 1996)

More than fifty per cent of the world population consist of the youth—that is, below 25 years of age. In fractured societies marked by social exclusion, the young, being the most inflammable material, take recourse to violence and spearhead terrorism. This is clearly reflected in the age profile of insurgents and terrorists the world over.

Many societies are multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. Often, ethnic conflicts occur in circumstances of discrimination as between communities. Ethnic discrimination triggers movements for political autonomy and separatist movements. Terrorism is used as a weapon for forcing demands for political self-determination. It has been found that about half the number of States in the world have come under ethnic strife and convulsions. The situations obtaining in Sri Lanka since 1983 and that in erstwhile Yugoslavia since 1981 are striking examples in this regard.

People who suffer exclusion socially, economically and politically take recourse to migration from places of their origin, often illegally. The estimate of world migrant population puts the size of migrants at 80 million, 60 per cent of whom are dependants. This has given rise, *inter alia*, to serious growth of refugee populations within countries and across borders. Migrant people, vulnerable as they are to social and economic exploitation, tend to spawn terrorist movements.

Religion, down the history of mankind, has been a very potent factor of human conflict, including terrorism. Particularly where States get involved in religion and theocratic approaches as a vehicle for access to power, there could be State terrorism. That is how crusades and Saracenic wars have been fought in the Middle Ages of human history. British history was, for scores of years, the history of Church-State conflict with attendant persecutions. Even in South India, from the 9th to the 12th centuries, we had conflicts between the Shaivites and the Vaishnavites.

Religion and language get identified with particular sections of society and, in fact, get transformed into the problems of the “minorities” which in turn cause conflicts and violence. This, in fact, is a world phenomenon, as reflected in the developments in some parts of Eastern Europe.

When violence and conflicts travel from one country to another or get located with transnational bases, the problem of international terrorism arises. It has been estimated that in about two decades from 1975, in the average, there have been about 500 international terrorist attacks with not less than 1000 casualties. Forms of terrorism have been bombings, armed attacks, arson, hijacking of aircraft, etc. International terrorism has been neutral to regions. This phenomenon has been occurring across the globe — Latin America, Europe, West Asia, Africa and Asia.

Threat perceptions from super powers and neighbouring countries have driven developing countries to take recourse to incredible levels of military spending. It has been estimated that during the period from 1987 to 1994, the world military spending was of the order of over U.S. \$7000 billion. Developing countries spend foreign exchange of about U.S. \$34 billion in a year. The colossal global deployment of resources on production, trade and trafficking in arms has very high opportunity costs. This pre-empts resources for human development — for nutrition, health and education and attendant access to skills, employment, income, wealth and power. Lack of human development leads to the vicious cycle of social, economic and political exclusion and consequent terrorism.

An altogether new dimension of crime, violence and terrorism is drug addiction and the international narcotics trade that thrives on it. This is a problem which has defied any kind of solution so far, whether through national or international action.

An analysis of the various causes and dimensions of terrorism would reflect the underlying truth that terrorism is a manifestation of threat to the personal security of the human being — whether such threat is between individuals or groups or communities or from the State itself or from other States/countries.

It is democracy that would ensure the basic security of the human being by pre-empting terrorism. The democratic form of governance:

- establishes macro and micro-economic policies, securing the social and economic integration of all sections of the society;
- facilitates political participation by all;
- mobilizes youth power into a constructive force;
- provides means of livelihood to people in their places of origin without driving them to be refugees in alien environment;
- establishes secularism as a way of life;
- forges linguistic and ethnic cohesion;
- deploys resources on human development rather than on arms build-up;
- saves the human being from suicidal self-denial of personal security caused by drug addiction;
- ensures faithful implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Indeed, terrorism is the disease and democracy its remedy.

Thank you.

## CONSENSUS BUILDING—ROLE OF COMMONWEALTH AND ITS PARLIAMENTARIANS\*

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As we near the end of the present century, there has been a sea-change in the world economy and political scenario. These vast economic, political and technological changes have their impact on human development, have projected their many global issues which need to be handled by consensus rather than confrontation, international inter-dependence rather than nationalistic isolationism. What are these global issues? On the economic front, these are, to my mind, economic growth of developing countries on (under?) their own steam rather than as a synchronized outcome of growth in industrialized countries, multinational and transnational location of industries, expansion of international trade, including bi-diversification of exports, integration of financial markets and maintenance of sustained net capital flows in terms of direct investments, portfolio investments and official and private borrowings, technology transfers, economic migration and regional economic integration.

In regard to all these economic issues, consensus would need to be built up both within the respective countries and concerned foreign countries, particularly when protected economies are getting liberalized, the people concerned have a lot of apprehension. These are fears of new forms of economic imperialism. Manpower redundancies and retrenchments are feared where new technologies are imported, on the grounds that they may disturb employment.

Countries which make foreign investments also have their share of apprehensions; they fear that the liberalization policies may not be stable and sustained. There are also people of these countries who believe that transnational movement of investments denies them employment and creates aid elsewhere. Further they apprehend that goods and services coming from developing countries have an unfair competitive advantage in international trade. Such apprehensions also give rise to a number of trade-related issues belonging in other domains like labour, environment, etc.

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\*At the First Plenary of the 42nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Kuala Lumpur, (20 August, 1996).

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On the social front, issues are by and large non-controversial or at least less contentious like, for example, eradication of illiteracy, empowerment of women, tackling the problem of AIDS, elimination of narcotics, trade and drug addictions and tackling international crime.

While consensus building is rather simple on non-controversial issues, on economic issues the process would call for laborious and patient work at national, bilateral and multilateral levels. The advantages of integration with the regional and global economy will have to be brought home by a sustained process of dialogue. Similar exercises may have to be undertaken in countries from where investments are made transnationally to allay their fears.

In this process of consensus building, the Commonwealth and their parliamentarians can play a very significant and positive role. This is because of the nature of the Commonwealth itself. It is a voluntary organization, not tied down by rigidities of codified charter. The modality of its operations is consultation and cooperation on matters of common interest. The Commonwealth countries have commonalities in their legal systems, education and parliamentary institutions. The CHOGM meet periodically and give political sanctity to the approaches evolved through formal and informal exchange of views.

The parliamentarians of Commonwealth countries when they meet on occasions like this Conference or when they bilaterally exchange Delegations can, based on carefully thought-out preparatory action, identify social, economic and political issues of common interest, conduct informal deliberations and build consensus. Many parliamentarians, parliamentary institutions of Commonwealth countries have well equipped library, reference and documentation wings; some of them also have very good training infrastructure. These facilities could be used for informative documentation of issues deserving consensus building and for imparting training to the parliamentarians, local legislators, administrators and opinion-makers. Parliamentarians and functionaries so trained will have the right orientation in moulding the opinion of the electorate and constituencies.

I shall now conclude Mr. President, requesting that this Conference may even deliberate on the feasibility of establishing formal or informal mechanisms of consensus building, including for taking common approaches on various issues that may come up before the other world bodies, including those under the United Nations umbrella.

Thank you for your attention.

## INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM—ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS AND PARLIAMENTS\*

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As we transit into the next millennium, we are leaving behind a gory track of World Wars, civil wars and incredible blood-shed like the human kind has never witnessed before. The first priority of Governments and Parliaments in the next millennium should be to make the world safe for international peace and security. Weapons of mass destruction should be dismantled and destroyed wherever they may exist.

The concerns of Natural Law which subsumes human rights in all their dimensions is central to the jurisprudence of all of us in the Commonwealth. This centrality has to be vigilantly guarded in our practices as well. We cannot consider ourselves truthful practitioners of human rights protection unless empowerment of women is built on the foundations of partnership in politics. Chairman Mao observed that women hold half the sky. But, they don't seem to hold more than one tenth of the political sky. Hence, my call for partnership.

As national economies get increasingly globalised, those involved in international trade and investments look for political stability. But, the trend in the world is towards rainbow coalitions. As on date, about 60 Governments in the world, cutting across regions, are run by coalitions. Practical economics is political. So, sophisticated mechanisms have to be created to make economic development neutral to political polarisation.

People all over the world are inclined to treating privileges and immunities of parliamentarians only in their very limited connotations. This realisation would need to inform the parliamentarians in holding themselves accountable in and outside the Houses. It is often breach of the bounds of accountability, whether it be by the Government or the parliamentarians individually or collectively, that invites tendencies towards what has come to be termed as judicial activism.

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\*At the First Plenary of the 43rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Port Louis (20 September, 1997).

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Public service calls for full time involvement and work. Parliamentarians cannot any longer carry on their normal professions and do public service part-time. In order to attract talent and retain the same, the salaries, allowances and perquisites of parliamentarians should be consistent with their full time involvement; should be such as would vest them with stature and dignity; should be such that they won't have to seek out obligations from individuals or institutions and would help them maintain probity and standards.

Economic deprivation, unemployment and poverty are the gravest dangers to civilized governance. These issues crop up because, often, in our quest for growth and development, we have tended to leave behind the human being. Governmental policy planning and parliamentary business would need to place the human being centre stage.

The twentieth century has witnessed degradation of environment of an unprecedented kind. Restoration of environmental balance and preservation of ecology and biodiversity should naturally become our obsession during the next century.

Building bridges between nations is basically a matter of people-to-people contact. International relations are run by Governments. While Governments of the day may be legitimate in themselves, they don't always reflect universality of peoples' views within nations on international relations. To overcome this inadequacy, inter-parliamentary action should supplement inter-governmental action in running international relations. Bilateral parliamentary exchanges apart from multilateral cooperation like through the CPA, creation of country-interest groups within Parliaments, etc. can facilitate international understanding between peoples. I would name this process as 'Primary Track Diplomacy'.

Before I conclude, let me urge that the camaraderie that we profess in the CPA and try to follow up in action subsequently should also get duly reflected in our cooperation in other international fora.

Thank you.

## POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION IN THE WORLD\*

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We, the parliamentarians, mandated that we are to work for the improvement of standard of living of our peoples, have always considered that world peace is a prerequisite for development. For the purpose a non-violent and weapon-free international order needs to be established. Disarmament undertaken in this context needs to be universal and non-discriminatory.

The most significant contribution of the United Nations in its half a century of service to humanity is in the area of human rights. Thanks to the sustained international action under the UN aegis, the contours and dimensions of human rights and fundamental freedoms have come to be clearly defined. It is now well established that these rights and freedoms are inalienable, indivisible, and inter-dependent, having implications for civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

In practice, however, the world is yet to be made safe for human rights. These rights do get alienated because of international conflicts, because of insurgencies, ethnic conflicts and social upheavals within nations. These rights do get divided as between haves and have-nots, men and women, adults and children. There is a big hiatus between what we profess and what we practice. We need to practice the Vienna spirit of consensus and cooperation in protecting human rights. We should also avoid politicisation of human rights and tendencies to selectively target individual countries while monitoring violation of the rights.

Terrorism has been on the increase in this last quarter of the century. The root cause is often chronic regional economic disparities and dehumanising poverty which trigger local demands for self-determination of varying degrees. Ethnic and religious factors also confound situations. International terrorism largely stemming from political causes has frequently tended to exploit terrorist groups from across borders. More vigorous national, regional and international cooperation is needed in handling terrorism.

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\*At the 96th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Beijing, (September, 1996).

Over a year back, Heads of Government met at the World Summit for Social Development. They placed the human being at the centre of economic development. They recommended a simple recipe for integration of societies — poverty elimination and employment creation. What is needed now is sustained follow-up.

In many countries, the incredible size of population and unstemmed rate of its growth have seriously inhibited economic development. The world population is around five billion now. The estimated population doubling date is year 2030. Growth of population is essentially a problem of the developing countries. They need to address it. Fast demographic transition through reduction of fertility rate and awareness generation for the purpose are vital measures to be taken.

Experience has shown that economic controls have distorted resource deployment. Inefficiencies and diseconomies resulted. This, in fact, has been the rationale of liberalisation. When controls are dismantled, market takes over. This is also inevitable in a globalising world. But the market is bound to exclude people who cannot face competition or its adverse impacts. How do we liberalise and manage social exclusion? This, indeed, is the dilemma of economic reforms. Solution to this dilemma is a function of the pace of reforms.

One cannot force the pace. The transition to market economy is to be necessarily conditioned by concern for the human being. That is why we speak of reform with the human face. It is not to be seen as a slogan. It is a strategy.

Development planners should realise that economic growth is not a mere matter of GDP. Hungry people cannot be fed on tables of National Accounts Statistics. Distribution of wealth is very important as well. But wealth is to be generated before it could be distributed. The process of wealth generation should be self sustaining as well. It is in this sense as well that the strategy of economic reforms becomes important.

What could be the elements of this strategy? These are:

- A social safety net to protect those who face exclusion by the market.
- Provision of the basic and minimum needs of the people — food security, primary health and education.
- Provision of full, freely chosen and productive employment opportunities.

In fulfilling these parameters of economic reforms with a human face, the State has to play a pivotal role. In other words, the market should not totally replace the State. Otherwise, the credibility of reforms and, therefore, reforms themselves would get negated.

In today's world, gender balance leaves much to be desired. Women are more often denied their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Especially, they stand deprived in terms of political participation, health education, employment, wages, wealth and personal security. Though women constitute half of humanity, it has been estimated that they account for three-fourths of the world's poor and two-thirds of the world's illiterate. Only recently, in this very city, the World Women's Conference met for the fourth time and adopted a Platform for Action. We need only to implement it for establishing gender balance.

Child exploitation in all its forms in whatever part of the world it may occur is reprehensible. It deserves to be terminated. Measures for termination have to flow from political commitment and social will. Measures should also be non-coercive. Most importantly, the issue of child exploitation should be depoliticised and delinked from collateral issues like international trade. Elimination of child exploitation is vital for its own sake.

A crucial item on the world agenda during the current decade has been the drive against drug abuse. Drive against production and consumption of narcotics has been virtually futile for obvious reasons. Drug addiction is essentially a psychic problem. It is neutral to prosperity and poverty. The ultimate solution lies, perhaps, in integrating individuals with families, families with communities, and communities with the society and value education for the purpose. Family based and community based action would be needed at the grassroots level.

I shall conclude now Mr. President and Delegates, thanking you for your attention. I also thank the Peoples Republic of China in having hosted this Conference in this historic and beautiful city of Beijing.

## CHALLENGES BEFORE THE WORLD\*

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Let me first convey to you the greetings of the Parliament and people of India who are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their Independence.

The present millennium has been one of triumphs and tragedies for humankind. Colonial and archaic order has given way to modern nation States and democracies. Scientific and technological revolution has swept over the globe. The Space has been conquered. But primordial instincts have subsisted. Two World Wars, several civil wars, genocides and ethnic explosions have taken an incredible toll of human lives. Social and economic iniquities are glaring. Nature has been grossly violated.

As we enter the next millennium, our Agenda for the future is self-evident. It simply is: establishment of lasting and universal peace; strengthening and perfecting democracy; creation of an equitable socio-economic order and restoration and preservation of environment. It means the IPU is more relevant than before and its task onerous.

Democracy often comes under stress because of creeping imperfections in its practice due to fast changing values in public life. Electoral processes need to be under vigilant reviews and reforms so that they are invariably free, fair and transparent and help in securing probity and standards in public life. A complementary role to achieve this objective will also have to be proactively played by political parties themselves.

Practice of democracy will also continue to be imperfect as long as women are denied meaningful partnership in politics. "The new social compact" established in this regard by the IPU itself in its 1994 Plan of Action has to be brought under implementation.

The print and electronic Media with its invaluable outreach to the people would need to proactively facilitate balanced flow of information to the people if democracy is to be lasting.

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\*At the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, on the General Debate on "Political, Economic and Social Situation", Cairo, (September, 1997).

The end of Cold War raised hopes of the so-called "peace dividend". It is nowhere in sight. The emerging security structures and conceptions in some parts of the world are deeply disturbing. We should not end up re-drawing old divisions. Otherwise we would be re-enacting the tragedies of the past. As the saying goes, "war is built in the minds of men". Established mind-sets have to be abandoned. We need to rededicate ourselves to the principles of collective security enshrined in the UN Charter.

Progress on disarmament has been limited. Nuclear weapons, the only weapons of mass destruction, are still not banned. These weapons have to be dismantled and destroyed. This is the overwhelming wish of the international community. Those in possession of these weapons seem to be lacking in their political will to fulfil this wish.

More than one-fourth of the world population, a staggering 1.3 billion, live in abject poverty. Disparities between and within nations are alarming. Two years have passed by since the World Summit for Social Development which called for poverty alleviation and socio-economic integration. We need to review the follow-up.

The recent World Employment Report of the ILO has described the world employment situation as "very grim". According to the report, the goal of full and productive employment is unattainable at least in the near future. The centrality of the human being in the process of development, especially through industrialisation, has to be reinstated. Continuous education and skill upgradation of the employed and employment orientation of the content of education for the new job seekers have to be given high priority in employment strategies.

Globalisation of economic forces and capital markets and cross-border flow of investments and trade have thrown up both opportunities for development as well as challenges. Some developing countries have availed of these opportunities and, in fact, emerged as power houses of world economic growth. Others are lagging behind, haunted by indebtedness, capital scarcity, technological obsolescence, lack of skills and unemployment. The primary role in finding solutions to these problems has to be played by the countries themselves. In simple terms, they should prudently manage their economies so that they are self sustaining; resources have to be mobilised domestically through growth oriented measures; inefficiencies in resource use should be removed; Government expenditures contained; borrowals also contained within carrying capacities; and an enabling environment created to facilitate non-debt creating capital flows. Developing countries can command respect and come to wield power in the comity of nations only by demonstrable self-reliance, including through prudence in economic management.

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Developed countries on their part would need to be perceptive of, and responsive to, the needs, the interests, the capacities and potentials of the developing countries, particularly while setting up the global economic agenda in its various dimensions so that the benefits of growth reach all in an equitable manner.

The United Nations has made salutary contributions in service to humanity in its fifty and odd years of existence. It should be strengthened to play its role as an effective, collective instrument of international peace and security, and global transformation of international relations with justice and equity for all.

The reform of the UN should bring its structure and functioning closer to the aspirations of the developing countries which constitute the overwhelming majority of its membership. A more representative UN is required to strengthen its capacity to face the challenges of the 21st century. The finances of the UN have to be put on sounder footing. All member states should pay their dues promptly and in full without pre-conditions. Expansion of the Security Council should be based on non-discrimination between the candidatures of developed and developing countries.

Before I conclude, let me, on behalf of the people and Parliament of India, place on record my deep appreciation of the significant contributions made and valuable service rendered by His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Fathy Sorour, the outgoing President of the IPU Council.

Thank you for your kind attention.



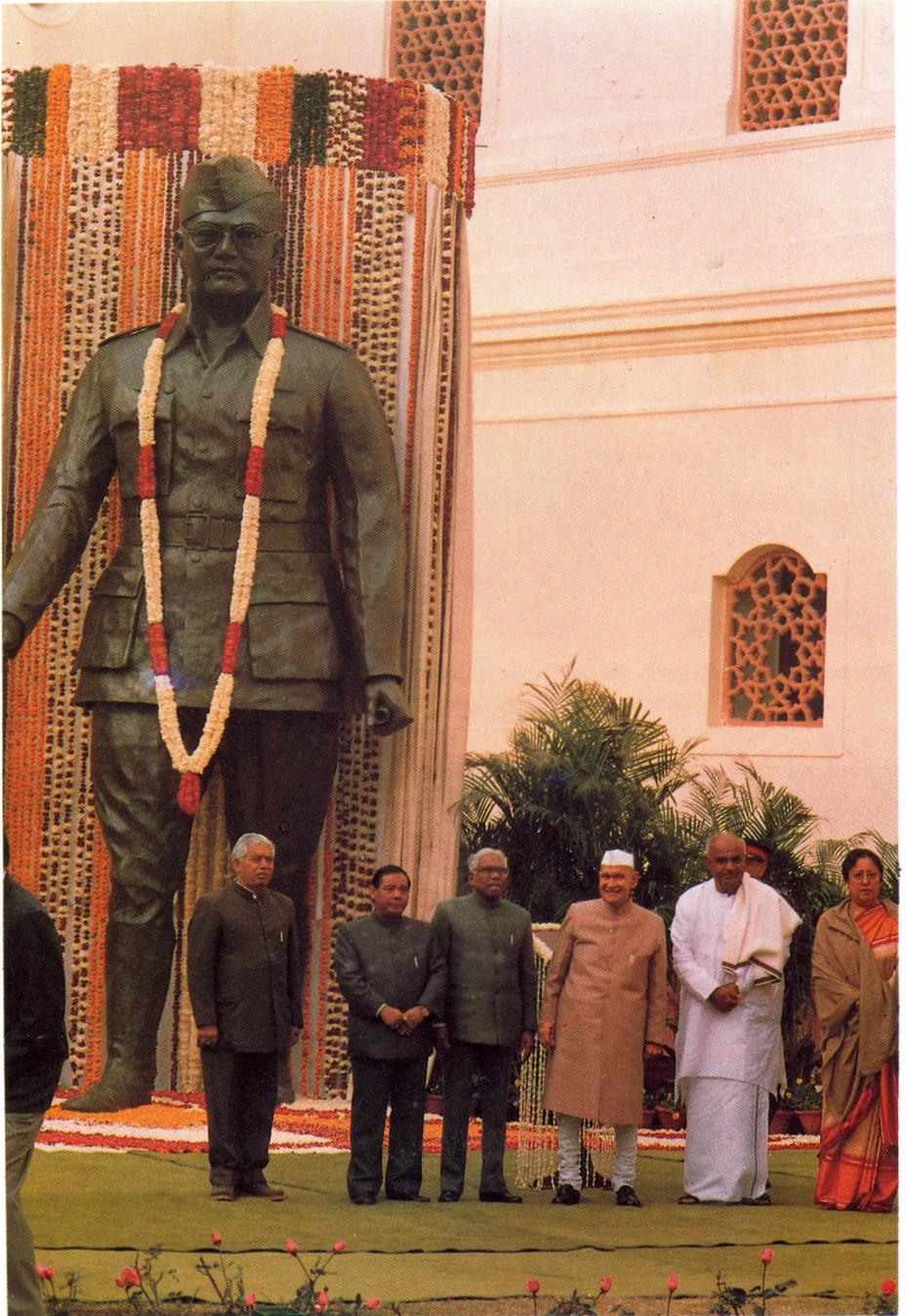
At the Presidential Procession, 24 May, 1996



At the Rashtrapati Bhawan with other high dignitaries



At the function to mark the 50th Anniversary of the First Sitting of the Constituent Assembly, Central Hall, Parliament House, 9 December, 1996



At the unveiling of the statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Parliament House Complex, 23 January, 1997



At the function to mark the 101st Birth Anniversary of Shri V.K. Krishna Menon, Central Hall, Parliament House, 6 May 1997



At the function in the Central Hall of Parliament House on the midnight of 14-15 August 1997 to mark the 50th Anniversary of Independence



At the function to bid farewell to the outgoing President, Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma, Central Hall, Parliament House, 22 July 1997



At the conferment of the Indian Parliamentary Group's Outstanding Parliamentarian Award 1996 to Shri Somnath Chatterjee, MP, Central Hall, Parliament House, 19 March 1997



At the Inter-Parliamentary Specialized Conference on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics", New Delhi



At the Second Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, Islamabad



With the Delegates to the Conference of Public Accounts Committees in SAARC Parliaments, New Delhi, August 1997; also seen in the picture are the Vice-President of India and Chairman, Rajya Sabha Shri Krishan Kant and the Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi



At the opening of the Exhibition organized by the Parliamentary Museum and Archives to mark the 50th Anniversary of the First Sitting of the Constituent Assembly



At the Orientation Programme for new members of the Eleventh Lok Sabha organized by the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training, July 1996



At the CII Partnership Summit in Chennai

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## II

### NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

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## AN AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE\*

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Let me first place on record my deep gratitude to all of you in having granted me the indulgence of remaining in the Chair and taking the floor for the first time in the history of this House.

We are assembled in this Special Session organised as part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of our Independence — to take stock of our achievements since becoming free, introspect on our inadequacies and set for ourselves an agenda for future.

### **POLITICAL LIFE**

#### **Popular elections and sustenance of democracy**

Since Independence, we have had eleven General Elections and over 300 State elections. Transfer of power to successive Governments has been smooth and peaceful. This is no mean achievement. We can be proud of being a true democracy when the world, cutting across regions, is dotted with countries where access to power is often through military *coups* and revolutions. The voter turnout averaging at around 60 per cent since 1984 as against 45 per cent during the first General Elections of 1952 reflects the increasing political awareness of our people. Our style of practising democracy has also proved that political consciousness is not necessarily a function of literacy.

#### **Conduct of business of the House**

While universal adult suffrage has been a resounding success, the grassroot signals I have been receiving as the Presiding Officer of this popular Chamber about the conduct of our business indicate that generally the people are deeply concerned. They are highly resentful of frequent bouts of pandemonium in the House, members collectively rising to attract

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\*Opening the Special Session of the Lok Sabha on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, New Delhi, (26 August, 1997).

the attention of the Chair, repeated marches into the well of the House, cross-talk and interruptions of members' interventions, etc., and feel that the expenditure on Parliament of the order of about Rs. 7,000 per minute of its time is a costly luxury that our country can ill-afford. It is quite understandable that the complexion of this Eleventh House is significantly different in that a large majority of them are the real sons of the soil in their constituencies and first-timers as well, and that they are impatient to improve the lot of the masses they represent and hence their tumult and tempestuousness. Our political parties have a great role to play in this context. They need to organise pre-electoral training for the aspirants for positions in this House.

### **Accountability**

The interface between the Parliament and the Executive has, no doubt, been by and large one of mutual understanding and complementarity. Nonetheless, of late, people have increasingly tended to seek adjudication in courts of law on issues of public grievance against holders of public offices through a spate of public interest litigation. The Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies of India went into this question in a Symposium towards the end of the last year. They found that the root cause of the problem concerns accountability. They observed, I quote: "The chain of accountability — of the Civil Service to the political executive; of the political executive to the Legislature; and of Legislature to the people has got snapped all the way. Accountability should be restored at all echelons." (unquote). So, let us collectively reinstate accountability, making it part of our style of working.

### **Probity and standards in public life**

Accountability is also an issue of probity and standards in public life. This is not merely a problem of the political world. It is as well of the world of civil servants, professionals, holders of public offices and of those who interact with them, including Non-Governmental Organisations. It is even a problem of the world of business. A group of our members, having taken the initiative proactively, are seized of this issue. My suggestion is that the term "holder of public office" be given a rather broad definition as Lord Nolan of the British Parliament has done in a report submitted to the House of Commons by a Committee headed by him. All those who come within the ambit of such a definition should be held to be accountable in their respective domains through mechanisms that we should evolve to prevent errant behaviour.

Ensuring probity and standards in public life is needed for carrying credibility with the public, apart from its importance for its own sake. Credibility is to be carried by demonstrable action rather than public pronouncements. Actions such as the enactment of the Lok Pal Bill and securing exemplary conviction of a few errant holders of public offices through successful prosecutions in due process of law rather than blanket public self-denigration are the surest ways to carry credibility, apart from being fair to quite a good crop of our leaders who have spent all their lives in selfless service to the public.

The problem should also be handled where it originates. Punitive action for devious behaviour is *ex post facto* in nature. The Symposium of Presiding Officers of the Legislative Bodies in India about which I have made reference earlier kept this in view when they advised that the political parties should evince care in the right choice of candidates, including with reference to their antecedents, their education and training. They also emphasised the need for the people themselves to exercise their franchise with great caution and return to the legislative bodies candidates reputed for their probity and aptitude for public service. Political parties have to take up the task as well of educating the electorate in this regard, organisation of electorates being one of their prime functions.

### **Societal peace, violence and insurgency**

Societal peace is the basic requirement for bringing about socio-economic development. Having won our freedom non-violently under Mahatma Gandhi, known the world over as *Ahimsa Murthy*, we find violence, terrorism, insurgency and societal tensions surfacing in many parts of the country. We need to seriously introspect and go to the root of the problem, identify the motivations for these phenomena and eliminate them. Broad reviews of the present situation in the country have reflected the following causes for these phenomena:

- Social exclusion based on castes, communities and religions.
- Economic exclusion, attributes of which are seen as unemployment, under-employment, iniquitous income distribution, poverty and exploitation.
- Perceived political exclusion by denial of regional aspirations.
- Lack of adequate sensitivity in management of ethnicities.
- Frustration of the youth leading to political extremism.
- Demonstrable fall in standards in public life, *i.e.* of those in the establishment.

- Cross-border subversion.
- Disenchantment of the expatriates.
- Excesses by those wielding State power.
- Perceived denial of human rights.
- Imbalance in Media projection.
- Inadequacies in strategic thinking and intelligence.
- Inadequacies in the system of rendering criminal justice.

The United Nations observed its Golden Jubilee in 1995 by organising the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. The Summit called for social integration by basically addressing the problems of social, political and economic exclusion into which all the above factors are subsumed. India was a significant partner in the Summit. We would do well to follow up on the Summit Declaration and Programme of Action.

### **Empowerment of women**

We need to remind ourselves that about two years back, at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, we were the first to subscribe, without any reservation whatsoever, to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We also made a commitment to establish a National Policy for Empowerment of Women. I would request the Government to bring before the House in this Golden Jubilee Year, the draft policy which seems to have evolved through wide-ranging and nation-wide consultations since the Beijing Conference. The Parliament, on its part, has already established a Joint Committee on Empowerment of Women.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

We have a highly flawed system of management of administration. It is a highly centralised administration, away from the people. A billion people and a vast sub-continent that we are, there is no escape for us from our administrative management being meaningfully decentralised. That is the very spirit behind the Constitution 73rd and 74th Amendments. Four years have passed by since these Amendments. Can we claim that we have really shared power and made the Panchayati Raj system a reality on ground? We need to search our conscience.

Our administration, including the Police force, regrettably, has got significantly politicised. The Civil Service which is designed to be neutral being pressed into the service of political masters and use of the Police force for settling political scores have become facts of life today. This is

not conducive to the Rule of Law. The administration should be de-politicised and made responsive to the public and responsible only to the Rule of Law.

## POPULATION

Our country is rich. But our people are poor. This is significantly due to the unceasing population explosion. The route to finding solutions to most of our problems — food security, unemployment, under-employment, poverty, iniquities, in fact, management of our economy in all its social and political dimensions — is to be seen in successfully addressing this simple, but basic problem. If we can contain our population within the country's carrying capacity, we will turn it into a productive human resource, well nourished and insulated against morbidities. Let us take the Dr. M.S. Swaminathan Group report on population from the shelves and do some hard thinking about implementing it.

## EDUCATION

### Employment orientation of education

The stock of the illiterate amongst us is a mind-boggling 460 million. Speaking at the Chatham House, London, in October 1931, and lamenting the damage done to our educational system, Mahatma Gandhi said, I quote "I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully that today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago..... I defy anybody to fulfil a programme of compulsory primary education of these masses inside of a century". (unquote) Gandhiji has proved prophetic. He also suggested a solution — that of *Buniyadi Shiksha* or Basic Education. The philosophy behind it is simply that education should be relevant to the world of work. So long as this underlying issue of employment-relevance is not addressed at all levels of education — primary, secondary and tertiary — and people do not have faith in the worthwhileness of education, universalisation of elementary education and access for people to employable skills and employment will remain a mirage, whatever be the quantum of financial resources deployed for education.

### Resources for higher education

The National Policy on Education adopted by this House over a decade ago concludes, I quote:

The main task is to strengthen the base of the pyramid, which might come close to a billion people at the turn of the century. Equally, it is important to ensure that those at the top of the pyramid are among

the best in the world. Our cultural well-springs had taken good care of both ends in the past; the skew set in with foreign domination and influence; it should now be possible to further intensify the national effort in human resource development with education playing its multifaceted role. (unquote)

In order that this sound policy is implemented equitably, even while earmarking resources liberally for universalisation of elementary education from the public exchequer, for strengthening the apex of the educational pyramid, can we raise internal resources in the higher education sector by adopting a de-politicised strategy of rationalising the fee structure which would stipulate cost recovery from the well-to-do sections and scholarships for the poor?

## **AGRICULTURE**

### **Food self-sufficiency and Green Revolution complacency**

Through the Green Revolution we have not merely achieved food self-sufficiency since the 1970s, but have become a net exporter of foodgrains. This revolution has been spectacular considering the phenomenal growth of population. But, I am afraid that all are getting lulled into Green Revolution complacency. Application of the Green Revolution technologies has been feasible only in irrigated areas. Seventy per cent of culturable lands is situated in, and over forty per cent of foodgrains production in the country comes from, arid and semi-arid regions. For farmers and people in these regions, life is still an ordeal. Technology has not come to their rescue yet, despite deployment of financial and physical resources in dry farming.

### **Plateauing agricultural growth rate**

Agricultural growth rate has also plateaued at an annual compound rate of 1.7 per cent since 1990-91. The impact of population growth on the sizes of land holdings, the economic viability of intensive agriculture in suboptimal land holdings, and stagnation in productivity levels which are quite below international standards are disturbing and require deep investigation.

### **Inorganic cultural practices and their implications**

Our agricultural lands receive about 33 million tonnes of chemical fertilizers, apart from 61,000 tonnes of pesticides a year. Long-term sustainability of intensive agriculture based on inorganic cultural practices would also need detailed scrutiny. Such agriculture also has implications

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for food quality, protection of environment and preservation of biodiversity. Environment protection, and quality and safety of food, apart from self-reliance, need to be seen as essential elements of food security.

### **Agriculture, civil supplies and farm exports**

The interface of the agro-sector with domestic civil supplies sector and export front requires skilful management. The farmer has to receive remunerative prices so that the same would be a self-triggering mechanism for increasing private investment in agriculture. At the same time, the people need to access essential commodities at affordable prices. A stable export presence is to be ensured as well, if we are to exploit the enormous export potential of our agro sector. Can we relieve the farmers of strangulating controls on production, movement, marketing and prices of farm produce to ensure the economic viability of farming? How do we find the colossal resources required for public investment in agricultural infrastructure? How do we harmonise the interests of domestic consumption and export trade in farm products? These are crucial issues which need careful examination.

## **PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION**

### **Freedom from hunger**

While we have achieved freedom from famine, freedom from hunger is not given to all. While our foodgrains production has quadrupled since 1950-51 and per capita net availability of foodgrains is about 500 grammes per day, food availability is not matched by food access for all — for sheer want of purchasing power of those living below the poverty line. At present, through the Public Distribution System, we are providing subsidised rations to those living below the poverty line and even to those above the poverty line. While targeted supply management at public expenditure to benefit those below the poverty line is appropriate and necessary, in the long run, or even in the medium term, lasting solution to the problem of food security can be found only by vesting the weaker sections with purchasing power through gainful employment.

### **Delivery of services**

Efficient and leakage-free delivery of services in the Public Distribution System, as long as it is run, is indispensable. Pilferage of essential commodities and tampering with their quality in the Public Distribution System should be construed as heinous crimes and met with drastic penalties.

## INDUSTRY

### Past and future

Since 1948, we have had six Industrial Policy Statements. Planned growth of industries, mixed economy with the Public Sector having the commanding heights, licensing regulations and controls, domestic industry protection, and protection of the small scale sector were the features of these policies. These policies were relevant to, and consistent with, the bygone years of a nascent economy. We have had positive as well as negative consequences. On the positive side, we have developed an infrastructure of basic industries and indigenous entrepreneurship. On the negative side, we have had to suffer fragmented production capacities, low technology levels, low inflow of foreign capital, monopolistic trends and lack of international competitiveness. To face the challenge of international market competition, we have had to liberalise since 1991. Delicensing and deregulation have had to be carried out; investment restrictions dismantled; private sector allowed access to areas previously reserved; and flow of foreign technology and foreign capital rendered easier. New corporate structures through mergers and amalgamations, modernisation and absorption of new technologies and new managerial styles seem indispensable. Our corporations themselves are slowly becoming transnational and multinational. What should be our strategy to harmonise the cross-border thrusts of our Corporate Sector with protection for domestic industry built up on our own factor strength over the years, in the face of capital starvation and technological obsolescence? The House may like to go into this in some depth.

### **Rehabilitation of sick Central Public Sector Enterprises : Its inevitability and human dimensions**

About sixty of our Central Public Sector Enterprises are chronically sick. We need to take a hard look at them. We do, of course, have several proposals for rehabilitation and turn around of some of these corporations. The process of decision-making in regard to the future of these corporations has been marked by inordinate delays. Quick and bold decisions are needed in regard to this matter. Such decisions call for strong political will and support, apart from very patient and sustained industrial relations exercises. Restructuring and rehabilitation of enterprises is always a very painful process. Liberal separation compensations and retraining and redeployment of redundant employees will have to be organised wherever feasible. Until conclusive decisions are taken one way or the other in regard to

restructuring of Public Enterprises, labour payments cannot be allowed to fall into arrears. As on 31 July 1997, Central Public Sector Enterprises coming under seventeen Ministries of the Government of India had an outstanding labour payment arrears of Rs. 605 crore. Out of this, Rs. 435 crore are statutory dues under Provident Fund, ESI and Gratuity Laws. Some of these defaults also carry with them criminal liabilities. A demoralised and dehumanised work-force is likely to backlash on the very process of economic reforms.

Industrial sickness is not merely a problem of the Public Sector in our country. It has become endemic to the country's industry as a whole. The financial and economic dimensions of this sickness have been vividly presented in the working document for this Session. The Session may like to address this problem in its entirety.

### **A new work culture**

There needs to be a change in the managerial and industrial relations styles in our country. As our veteran trade union leader Ramanujam has advised, bipartism as a means of industrial conflict resolution should replace tripartism as industrial relations tend to get politicised and impacted by extraneous factors under the latter modality. A new work culture for the managerial as well as other employees should be developed, the hallmark of which should be emphasis on productivity. We compare very poorly in productivity *vis-a-vis* some of our neighbouring countries. Beyond a level, wage enhancements may have to be linked to productivity enhancements. Many successful private sector enterprises do have productivity linked wage structures negotiated with trade unions. We could make efforts to universalise this practice. Our working people, be they managers or others, need to come to terms with the truth that the surest social security for them is the commercial viability of their enterprises. Governments and trade unions also need to devote more attention than before to improving the lot of the unorganised workers who constitute 90 per cent of the work-force of the country.

### **EXPORT SCENARIO**

In the past, we had not necessarily opted for export led growth like some of the South-East Asian and East Asian economies. But we do have significant achievements in exports. Exports amounted to Rs. 108,478 crore in 1996 as against a mere Rs. 647 crore in 1951. In the 1950s, primary products accounted for 85 per cent of our exports. Now, manufactured

products constitute more than 75 per cent of our exports. However, some of the striking factors to be noted in respect of our export scenario are :

- Five products, gems and jewellery, ready-made garments, cotton yarn fabrics, marine products, drugs and pharmaceuticals, etc., constitute 40 per cent of our total exports in value terms, Sixty-nine other products constitute the rest of the exports.
- Since 1969-70, while the unit value index of our exports went up by eleven times, volume index went up by only five times.
- Nearly fifty per cent of our exports go to European countries and USA and Japan.
- Our share in world exports is less than one per cent.

The lesson to be drawn from these facts is that virtually we do not matter in world exports. Our export production base has to expand; our export products as well as their direction have to diversify; and exports in terms of volume also have to significantly enhance. In the phase of globalisation of economies, our economic survival and prosperity depend, to a significant extent, on the expansion of exports. This can happen only if there is an expansion of imports as well. This itself is one of the justifications for economic reforms and liberalisation.

## **ECONOMIC REFORMS**

### **Wealth generation**

Economic reforms is simply a matter of living within means. Means can be created only by generation of wealth. Wealth will not get generated unless our resources are deployed efficiently. Even the Peoples Republic of China has come to accept this position and hence their adoption of the socialist market economy. If we raise our resources through taxation and if their investments do not yield adequate returns, growth will only be stagnant or negative. Again, if our resources are distributed in terms of subsidies without consideration of their potential for stimulating wealth generation, the consequence will be the same, *viz.* stagnation and negative trends and growth. For the first time, a transparent and comprehensive presentation of our subsidy regime has been made by the Ministry of Finance. I hope the House will take the occasion of this Session to reflect on this presentation as well. May be, we can examine the scope for phased removal of at least non-essential subsidies. Of course, we can borrow domestically and from abroad. But, for servicing the borrowals and the repayment of loans, our investment policies should be prudent and capable of generating wealth. This has not been happening in the past. We should

make it happen now, particularly because our external debt service ratio is twenty-six per cent of our GDP. Our per capita external debt is Rs. 3,286 which is 35 per cent of the per capita income of Rs. 9,321. We are indeed in a debt trap. The State Governments also are caught in an internal debt trap, their revenue generations significantly getting absorbed by their debt service liabilities *vis-a-vis* the Government of India. The entire concept of foreign direct investment is based on the fact that it is non-debt creating. Corporate bodies receiving investments are expected to earn enough to give returns to the investor.

### **Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs)**

People do have apprehensions that because of the so-called "over heating" of the economy due to large flows of foreign capital, we may be confronted with problems like those faced by Mexico and Thailand. So long as we ensure that the flow of foreign capital is channelled to priority sectors like infrastructure for the development of which we cannot find our own internal resources of any realistic scale for a long time to come, follow prudent investment policies and take adequate safeguards against fly-by-night operations of foreign investors and have a vigilant monetary policy, we will not go the way Mexico and Thailand have done.

We would also need to bear in mind that our country, as yet, does not attract as much flow of foreign funds as other countries like China and our South-East Asian neighbours do. Our share in foreign direct investment inflows into all developing countries is less than three-fourth of one per cent. The flow of foreign capital and their volatility will be as much favourable to us as the investment climate we generate in our country. We also need to significantly reduce the time gap between clearance of foreign investment proposals and commissioning of projects. My first hand information from China is that between clearance of investment proposals and commissioning of projects, the time gap is not more than three years.

Investments, like water, will flow by gravity. Gravity is towards areas where there is ready-built infrastructure. The bulk of our investments are flowing towards Maharashtra and Gujarat, particularly metropolitan areas. This does create problems of regional disparities and in-country economic migrations in search of employment. This problem of regional disparities is experienced intensely in the Peoples Republic of China where they have opened up coastal regions and certain Export Processing Zones for industrialisation. We would do well to learn from the experiences of other reforming economies as well in the context of analysing our experiences in this regard.

Our employment scenario since 1951 till now has been dominated by reliance on the agricultural sector. The ratio of employment in industry has remained stagnant, only services exhibiting increasing trend in employment. Casualisation of employment because of excess supply of labour relative to demand is also increasing. The impact of economic reforms on quality of employment is yet another aspect deserving serious examination. Nearly three decades have lapsed since the first National Labour Commission gave its report. The employment scenario, labour standards, technology inflows and skill requirements have undergone a sea-change since. Establishment of the Second National Labour Commission is long overdue.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY : INDUSTRY ORIENTATION**

Science and technology services, like education, should also be relevant to the world of work. While pure science and laboratory based researches are important, they are primarily in the domain of the academic world—colleges and universities. A new thrust has to be given for industry and enterprise-based researches as a means of removal of technology obsolescence of our industries and of constantly updating the industrial technologies.

### **ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY : RESTORATION AND PROTECTION**

Our agricultural and industrial practices, ever growing urbanisation, in-country migrations and life styles of the people have taken an incredible toll on our forests, environment and ecology. We have, no doubt, taken significant measures to handle this problem. Many of the environment and ecology restoration measures are capital intensive. Modalities of finding resources for rectifying the damages already done should be gone into. Protective measures for the future should stem from readjustment of our life styles and thinking processes.

### **INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS**

Our country is reputed for its excellent track-record of honouring commitments made in terms of international Covenants and agreements, be they in the UN or in specialised agencies under the UN system. Before entering upon these commitments in international fora, no doubt, the widest possible national discussions and debates would be appropriate. But once commitments are made, we need to honour them. We can ill-afford to be seen as a nation renegeing on our commitments. Such commitments should be properly and duly followed up by national legislative action, wherever

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needed. While even failure of such legislative action would be understood and appreciated by the world community as a matter of democratic compulsion, dithering and inaction in this regard would only project India as an untrustworthy customer in running international relations in a civilized manner.

The issues I have attempted to present, in essence, imply the need for a *second freedom struggle*—this time the struggle should be for *freedom from our own internal contradictions* between our prosperity and poverty, between the plenty of our resource endowments and the scarcity of their prudent management, between our culture of peace and tolerance and our current conduct sliding towards violence, intolerance and discrimination. If we succeed in this second freedom struggle, there is no reason why in the ensuing millennium, we shall not be amongst the top nations of the world.

Thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIETAL CHANGE\*

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I have great pleasure in participating in this National Workshop on Human Rights and Societal Changes organised jointly by the Dalit Liberation Education Trust, Chennai and the National Human Rights Commission.

I find from the Programme Agenda of the Workshop that several crucial subjects relevant to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and their uplift have been listed for discussion. The subjects include social policy and societal changes, legislative measures, religious and social practices, etc. They have been designed to be discussed within the framework of the concept of human rights. Right now wide-ranging social, economic and political changes are taking place in our democratic polity. They have significant implications for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the backward classes. The Workshop Agenda is, indeed, contextual. My congratulations to the organisers of this Workshop.

The Preamble to our Constitution enjoins that justice, liberty, equality and fraternity shall be secured for all citizens. It is also patent in this mandate that justice shall cover social, economic and political spheres. The principle behind the constitutional concept of justice and equality is one of equity. Equity is very much more than arithmetical equality. Our people are entitled to liberty in terms of freedom of thought, expression and faith. And, the foundation of the concept of fraternity is dignity of the individual.

India has also actively and very constructively participated at the international level in giving shape to the International Bill of Human Rights which consists of:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

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\*At the National Workshop on "Human Rights and Societal Changes", Chennai, (3 August, 1996).

These instruments, *inter alia*, envisage that:

- right to liberty and equality is the birth right of all and is inalienable.
- there shall be no discrimination on any ground — race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- right to life and security of person shall be enjoyed by all.
- the right to economic and social rights include right to work, right to equal pay for equal work, right to form and join trade unions, right to education, etc.

India has also ratified these Human Rights instruments. The detailed provisions of our Constitution are also consistent with these instruments. Right to equality before law; prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth; equality of opportunity in matters of public employment; abolition of untouchability; right to freedom of speech, expression, association and movement; protection of life and personal liberty; prohibition of forced labour and employment of children; right to freedom of religion; protection of minorities, etc. have been provided for as justiciable Fundamental Rights in Part III of our Constitution.

Coming to the question of uplift of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the above background, what looms large is the size of the problem. The population of India is nearly a billion, about one-fifth of humanity. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes amongst them are about 25 per cent of the total population, about 5 per cent of humanity. More than the size of our population, the problem is its incredible magnitude and complexity. We are a country where major religions were born — Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. There are more Muslims in India than in any other countries of Middle-East and North Africa.

Since Independence, successive Governments have taken several affirmative actions. They have rejected the caste system. The Untouchability Act of 1955 and Protection of Civil Rights Act of 1976, consistent with Article 17 of the Constitution, have outlawed untouchability. The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 has abolished forced labour. The Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1976 prohibits employment of children in hazardous occupations.

The Central and State Governments put together invest over Rs. 10,000 crore per annum for the benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

We have also created institutional structures for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Minorities — the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and National Minorities Commission, apart from the National Backward Classes Financial Development Corporation.

India may have participated in the establishment of Human Rights instruments; may have constitutional provisions flowing from the concept of Human Rights, may have established a regime of laws to protect, and to positively discriminate in favour of, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; may have a large number of development programmes involving huge investments for the uplift of the backwards. All these measures taken on the initiative of the State need not necessarily bring about the uplift of the targeted people on account of two important reasons — firstly, implementation of laws and development programmes may be seriously suffering from inadequate delivery services; and secondly, societal changes have to take place from at the grassroot level, *i.e.* from amongst the very people whose uplift is sought to be brought about.

Grassroot level upsurge for societal changes is inhibited by several factors. The most significant amongst them is the archaic societal values in which people are steeped. We have centuries-old rigid and caste-based social structure. This caste structure is based on *Varnas* and *Jatis* which in turn are based on the fatalistic concept of *Karma*. According to this concept, one's social status is a function of one's natural and inherited birth; it is a matter of predestination. Our caste system is also based on irrational societal division in terms of occupations; and is based on duties and obligations, rather than on natural rights of human beings. Because of these concepts and values, the entire system has been hierarchical with oppressive gradations. Nor has there been much of mobility from the lower to the higher castes. The mix-up of castes and religion has also made the caste system a **stunning**, in fact, a maddening, matrix of sub-castes and communities. The system has become a dead-weight militating against human dignity and is a defilement of human rights.

If the practice of human rights is to be realised in the backdrop of this societal fabric, a radical break with tradition is required. And, if we are to bring about a sea-change in values and dismantle the old social order, the obvious remedy is education. With education comes enlightenment which, in turn, leads to generation of awareness. This alone can yield the upsurge that is required from amongst the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to match with the extent and intensity of State intervention in legislative and investment terms.

Education is very vital also for the smooth and non-violent transition of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from the category of depressed classes into the category of the prosperous and the empowered. The disturbing phenomenon experienced in certain parts of our country is the growth of caste based private *senas* or armies. This is due significantly to the exploitation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by unscrupulous elements in society. If education is imparted, because of the enlightenment that comes with that, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will not subject themselves to such exploitation.

Of course, economic development is also very vital. The budget allocations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are largely meant for their economic development. The Central and State Governments have further evolved policies for reservation of jobs in public service. It should be realised that as of now public service does not provide jobs for more than 20 million people. At an average annual rate of occurrence of vacancy positions at about 3 per cent, the total annual intake will be only about 6 lakhs. At the reservation rate of 25 per cent only about 1,50,000 people will be benefited annually. Thus while reservation is an affirmative action so far as it goes, it does not really present any practical solution to the problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in employment. There are also limits to the growth of employment in public service. Employment opportunities will increasingly become available in the liberalising economy only in the private sector. For expediting these employment opportunities, skill is required. This skill can be acquired only through education.

Reservation, whether it be for the purpose of education or employment, in the long run, is also likely to keep the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes back from genuine development.

Another important means of economic development is, of course, vesting depressed classes with rights over property. It is only command over some property that can help in even facilitating access to meaningful education. It is keeping this in view that land reforms measures have been taken in several parts of the country. While in some States land reforms have been implemented effectively, in many States they are yet to be implemented seriously. Greater effort is required in this area. At the same time, it should also be ensured that while implementing land reforms as a measure of distributive justice, land holdings are not reduced to uneconomic sizes. Uneconomic holdings could only result in sub-optimal farming, often driving the new class of land owners into under-employed people.

Our processes of implementation of programmes often involve spreading of resources thinly over vast areas. It is desirable that Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe habitations are identified and different development agencies come together at the grassroot level and invest all their resources in a coordinated way in such identified habitations.

Appropriate monitoring mechanisms should also be established at the Central as well as State levels to monitor the delivery of services. It is a known fact that even though the order of investment on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is about Rs. 10,000 crore per annum as of now, the reach of benefits is not universal. There are complaints of leakages of resources in the process of implementation.

Majority of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are agricultural labourers. Because of economic compulsions they send their children for work when they should be in schools. Child labour is self perpetuating. Children who labour lose education and therefore employment opportunities through education when they are adults. Without means of income for want of education, they, in turn, may continue to send their children to work. Child labour would need to be terminated by voluntary action on the part of the parents. Mere governmental efforts to terminate child labour through legislative measures will not yield the desired results.

Educational and economic development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes ultimately will enhance their electoral power, particularly in view of their huge number. This, in turn, will help them to become political and governmental decision-makers.

My prescription for the uplift of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is :

- Creating awareness about the international instruments on human rights and their implications and about the constitutional provisions, national laws and Government's affirmative actions.
- Creation of an upsurge by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes themselves through education and peaceful means so as to dismantle the pernicious caste system based on archaic values.
- Enhancement of work participation by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through human capital development.
- Not to look upon reservation in public service as a panacea for unemployment.

- Competing for securing employment opportunities by availing of benefits and the various developmental programmes of the Governments.
- Insisting on convergence of governmental resources and delivery of services in identified habitations of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Insisting on and participating in monitoring mechanisms to prevent leakage of governmental resources deployed for benefits for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Securing the future of the children by proactive termination and non-participation in child labour practices; and through all these means getting access to power as political and governmental decision-makers.

I wish the Workshop all success.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## GOOD GOVERNANCE — ITS MULTI-FACETED DIMENSIONS\*

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As we proceed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our Independence, the thought that inevitably occurs to me is that we do have many achievements to our credit in terms of good governance. We have a codified Constitution which envisions a secular democratic polity meant to secure for all civil liberties, equity and social justice, and the Rule of Law. According to the Directive Principles, the State is to play the role of the dispenser of welfare. Separation of Powers is a reality, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary generally playing their exclusive as well as mutually complementary roles. Our constitutional structure, being a Union of States, makes the system federal as well. The linguistic organisation of the States has helped in maintaining unity in diversity. There is proactive protection for the depressed classes and minorities. We have made efforts at planned economic development through a model of mixed economy; have achieved food self-sufficiency; have established basic infrastructure in the areas of industries, energy, transport and communications; and we are concededly one of the world's largest technical and technological manpower reservoirs. These are no mean achievements. In Asia as a whole, our performance in several respects is comparable and even better than that of many other countries, considering that we are truly a democratic country.

As we transit into the 21st century and as the economies are globalising, we need to introspect. The inevitable question that emerges is whether our performance has been adequate, whether we should not perform better. An objective stocktaking does certainly reflect that while we have all the trappings of good governance and certain creditable achievements, we have more ground to cover.

Our parliamentary history has demonstrated to the world that we are a country of a reasonable level of political stability which is one of the basic elements of good governance. We have come one full round from single-party rule and multi-party Opposition to multi-party rule and single-party

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\*At the Seminar on "Good Governance", New Delhi, (28 September, 1996).

Opposition. We have learnt the art of managing political contradictions and of striking workable equilibrium as between ideologically divergent groups. Transfer of power down the elections has been fairly peaceful, but the Parliament can make significantly better contributions to debates on issues of basic national concerns — unity and integrity, faster demographic transition, human capital development, wealth generation based on sound macro-economic policies, distributive justice, etc.

As Alexander Pope said: "About forms of Government, let fools contest; the Government best administered is the best". That is, Administration — the Executive — should be an instrument of good governance. Our Executive can give good governance in our pluralistic society only if decentralisation down to the grassroot level becomes its style of functioning. Decentralisation is sharing of power. It is in this basic sense that the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 devolving power on Panchayats becomes significant. It is to be seen, however, whether power really comes to be vested in, and exercised by, Panchayats *in practice*. The practice of power sharing between the Centre and the State shows that having established a federal system, we have often exhibited fatal attraction to strong centralism. Initially, for example, the Centre's jurisdiction in education was confined to certain limited areas of higher and technical education, particularly standard setting. But by the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution, we regressed and the Centre advanced into concurrent jurisdiction over the entire gamut of education down to primary level. Why should village schools be run on dictates from the Centre? Agriculture is a State Subject. But, in this area, we have created a maze of central structure with massive and expensive bureaucracies and central and centrally sponsored schemes. The result is: a culture of dependence on the Centre has been created; this also causes friction between the States and the Centre.

Whether it is at the Central level or at the lower decentralised levels of Administration, a sea-change in procedures is the crying need of the day. Several Administrative Reforms Commissions have been established in the past. Many have ended up recommending new coordination mechanisms and new institutions. This has meant creation of more bureaucracy. Simplification of procedures has rarely received meaningful attention. Because of complicated procedures, inordinate delays are caused in implementation of projects. This has resulted in cost over-runs. Our country can ill afford this. The only action to be taken in this area is to decide not to have any more Administrative Reforms Commissions but simply to go into the issue of procedural reforms in each sector and at each level of decision-making.

Our Judiciary, manned as it is by experienced personnel from the Bar as well as the Bench, does maintain very high professional standards. Of late, however, people all over the country do speak of judicial activism in mixed voices. There are those who heartily welcome this as a sign of good governance. There are also those who consider it as detracting from good governance on the thought that the judicial system is advancing into domains where they do not belong, namely those of the Legislature and the Executive. It will be clear to objective thinkers and analysts that the so-called judicial activism is not certainly proactive. It is indeed reactive, as it should be. It is obvious that each wing of governance will have to play its role according to its own rules of the game without any act of commission or omission or acquiescence. Of course, aberrations do occur. Judicial functionaries sometimes take recourse to avoidably strong *obiter dicta*. While, no doubt courts of higher jurisdiction have applied correctives in such situations, it will be worthwhile examining whether training systems of the Judiciary cannot be geared to give appropriate orientation for its own functionaries. Perhaps, even common interactive training and orientation programmes for judicial, legislative and executive functionaries could be thought of in the limited area of maintaining the dignity of jurisdictional boundaries.

A vibrant Media is a strong bulwark of good governance. We have all along followed, and rightly so, a policy of encouraging self-regulation and self-restraint by the Media in the matter of dissemination of news under the broad umbrella of the Press Council of India. Our Media can achieve still higher levels of professionalism and objectivity. Its credibility will only enhance if it facilitates balanced presentation and flow of information. If the media detracts from objectivity, balance and professionalism, individual citizens or institutions could get subjected to what Margaret Thatcher once described as "trial by the Press" in which the affected parties cannot *effectively* defend themselves.

Without *de facto* protection of human rights in all its dimensions, there can be no good governance. The issue is not merely one of establishing constitutional and statutory provisions for safeguarding human rights. It is one of going into the root causes of denial of these rights on ground and eliminating those causes. Civil liberties cannot be protected without human rights education of the society and the official functionaries. People may tend to agitate for regional autonomy which is a form of exercise of the human right for political participation — if there are regional economic disparities. The solution, then, is ensuring regional balance in economic development. If women are not empowered by grant of access to education and, therefore, to employment, income and power, their human right of non-discrimination would stand violated. If children are sent to the world of work instead of to

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the world of education, their human right of protection against economic exploitation would stand denied. In all these areas, those in positions of power have to exercise political will and commitment with the active support of the civil society for ensuring good governance.

Sound macro-economic policy as a measure of good governance in very simple terms only means productive deployment of material and human resources. Such deployment should help in the generation of wealth. If, for example, resources generated by recourse to taxation as a means of transfer of income are not productively invested, wealth will not get generated. In fact, even transfer of income will not take place. This will not be conducive to equity or social justice. Only productive investment of resources can lead to sustainable wealth generation. All the structurally adjusting countries, including China which has opted for the model of socialist market economy, are having a common problem — that is, of correcting inefficient use of resources. There is no textbook formula for making this correction. Each country while have to evolve its own, at the same time, minimising human distress in the short and medium terms.

One of the examples of inefficient resource use is establishment of a regime of subsidies. Subsidies are self-perpetuating. Once established, it is rather difficult to withdraw the same. It does not lead to sustainable wealth generation. It only erodes wealth already generated. They are difficult to administer because of the sheer number of the beneficiaries. The destination of subsidies very often is not the deprived sections of the society. Unintendedly though, therefore, subsidy administration implies transfer of income from the haves to haves only. Above all, subsidies being crutches detract from enhancement of productivity and efficiency. Phasing out of subsidies, therefore, is a modality of cutting down waste in resources use.

We, in India, have plenty of productive resources. If only we manage their deployment well, we can stop crying for external assistance and complain about external debt trap. As our former Prime Minister, Shri Chandra Shekharji has said, "We will be respected as a nation only in case we set our own house in order".

Good governance is a very vast subject. It has multi-faceted dimensions. I have tried to present in this paper some basic aspects of this subject as I consider important. I hope that the issues I have projected would stimulate deep discussion.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Jai Hind.

## ETHICS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE\*

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Ethics in governance is a matter which has come to hold the attention of people today universally. The issue of what has come to be referred to as "good governance" is even being suggested by multilateral and other agencies as a qualifying parameter for countries to seek financial aid from them. What these agencies simply mean by "good governance" is that, *inter alia*, aid provided should be used for the purpose for which it is given. There should be no corrupt practices. Modalities and procedures for use of aid should be transparent. There should be accountability in achieving the targets and objectives. We are, and should be, concerned with ethics in governance for its own sake and proactively.

Peoples' representatives are holders of the trust of their constituents. Naturally, the electors expect that the care of this trust is not abused. The electors are persuaded by political parties to return their candidates to legislative bodies based on much publicised election manifestoes. When they return particular candidates, they trust what the parties have stated in the manifestoes. They trust that the candidates returned by them will also work by the manifesto promises. But it is our experience that many manifesto promises are breached by the political parties as well as the candidates. Manifestoes have largely become populist promises unethically made. The first principle of ethics in our democracy should be that political parties and legislators stand accountable to the people in terms of their manifesto promises.

When we met in October, 1996, we deliberated on accountability. Our finding was that the chain of accountability had come to be broken all the way — that is, accountability of the Civil Service to the political executive, of the political executive to the Legislature, of the Legislature to the electorate. There is need for an introspection by our political world on this situation and for corrective actions. The Civil Service in our system is expected to be politically neutral. Often this neutrality itself is neutralised

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\*At the symposium on "Need for Constitution of Ethics Committees in Legislatures" following the 61st Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, Shimla, (23 October, 1997).

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because of the politician-civil servant nexus. Mass-scale transfers of civil servants are made whenever a new Government takes charge in some States. In the result, they stand intimidated, demoralised and politicised. Very often, many crucial Civil Service posts in the Governments and in the field remain unfilled, bringing implementation of development programmes to a standstill and destroying the stability of administration. Frequently transferred officers don't develop professional expertise in their jobs. Above all else, this clone of politician-civil servant will come to wield authority without responsibility or accountability, undermining the very basis of our parliamentary democracy. Political ethics demands that there should be understanding amongst all political parties for the abolition of this "mass-transfer industry".

I feel compelled to make a special mention about politicisation of the police force, the members of which are also expected to be neutral civil servants. The police force symbolises the coercive authority of the State. If its neutrality is broken and is made to serve political masters, what breaks down is the Rule of Law itself, because it has implications in terms of violation of human rights and State terrorism.

The manner of financing of elections in general has implications for relations between legislators and those in positions of authority in the Government on the one hand and the election financiers on the other. The activities of the Government having become complex over the years, embracing several crucial aspects of the common man's life, the community of holders of public office has become rather large in size and diversified in its role and authority. The interface between holders of public office and providers of various kinds of service has intensified. When service providers also become financiers of elections, corrupt practices become rampant. It is in this background that the ethical dimension of the nexus between politicians and industrialists and businessmen gets projected to public view. It is permissible under the Company Law for corporate bodies to make contributions to political parties. But the problem is that there is no transparency about the extent of contributions. The consequence is that there could be *quid pro quo* between industrialists and politicians which may ultimately militate against equality before law, largesse being given to favoured industrialists. In effect, individual industrialists may even come to influence Government policies. The problem has to be addressed by electoral reforms.

The third nexus is between politicians and criminals. History sheeters get to be preferred candidates of political parties in running for offices because they are seen as winning candidates. The Election Commission is since taking initiatives for barring such persons from electoral contests.

The laws relating to qualifications for, and disqualification of, members of legislative bodies on grounds of criminality, including the constitutional provisions, the Representation of Peoples Act, Prevention of Corruption Act, etc., should be comprehensively reviewed and re-established leaving no scope for doubts and interpretations or for arbitrary exercise of powers by election officials. Prevention of entry by criminals into, and of their continuance in, legislative bodies by law is only a technical aspect of the matter. More important is the role that the political parties themselves have to play in this regard as well. Aspirants for membership may not have been subjected to convictions. But the electorate does have clear assessment of the track-record of aspirants for public offices in terms of their public service and their general reputation for probity, integrity, criminality, etc. Political parties should make conscious and proactive efforts at sensing this assessment of the electorate and based on that exclude from their candidatures persons with questionable track-records.

We have been making efforts for nearly three decades now to enact the Lok Pal law to bring public functionaries, including those in high places, under the surveillance of exalted and independent statutory authority. We have not so far succeeded. We should expedite the enactment of this law.

One of the positive measures that needs to be considered to prevent recourse to unethical practices by the legislators in the discharge of their duties is to provide them salaries and allowances consistent with their status and responsibilities. According to the Warrant of Precedence of the Government of India, members of Parliament occupy positions above the Secretaries to Government.

The proliferation of political parties and consequent 'hung Legislatures' put a premium on defections. Defections, by their very nature, are unethical. Of course, the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution which is the law on defections has been established. Our experience with invocation of the Tenth Schedule, however, has thrown up a number of practical problems in handling issues relating to disqualification of members on account of defections. Time has come for us to review the Tenth Schedule in the light of our experience and perfect it.

Discipline and decorum in legislative bodies are not mere matters of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Houses. Rules are the means for securing discipline and decorum which, in turn, stem from a basic consideration of ethics. What is this consideration? It is simply that every second of the time of the Houses shall be used by the members in

servicing their electorate, the people at large. Indisciplined conduct of members, including slogan shouting, avoidable interruptions of debate, long-winded speeches exceeding the time granted by the Presiding Officers, etc., results in wastage of valuable time meant for transacting business in service to the public. It also results in wasteful public expenditure. I would call upon all the Presiding Officers to establish a strict system of time-use and implement it. All of you would also agree what a delight it has been for us over the last two days to have facilitated orderly conduct of business, strictly conforming to time-limits for statements. I would further call upon the Presiding Officers to calculate the cost of each second of their House-time and give wide publicity for the same so that public awareness about, and resentment against, wastage of House-time is generated.

It is well established that indisciplined conduct in the Houses amounting to criminal acts do not come within the scope of parliamentary privileges and immunities. The Presiding Officers, in my opinion, would do well — in cases of such acts — to initiate privilege proceedings *suo motu* and take them to their logical conclusion, including expulsion of the guilty members in due process without prejudice to other actions under the relevant penal and criminal laws of the country.

The various issues of ethics that I have referred to have implications directly or indirectly for the privileges of legislative bodies. The question that could be naturally raised in this context is whether the Privileges Committees in their present form cannot handle ethics issues. My understanding is that "ethics" is a larger issue in which privileges are subsumed. This apart, there is a preventive dimension to the ethical standards of conduct of holders of public office. The Rajya Sabha has already established an Ethics Committee in March, 1997. There are Ethics Committees in countries like U.K., the United States and Australia. A Group of the Committee of Privileges of the Lok Sabha has studied Ethics Committees in these countries. This Symposium is going to have the pleasure of participation by the members of this Group. I am sure interaction between the Presiding Officers and the members of this Group will help the Lok Sabha take meaningful decisions on the need for Ethics Committees and on their structure and functions, if the need for the same is going to be established finally. I shall desist from suggesting any framework for Ethics Committees and limit myself to pointing out some of the practices that exist in other countries for ensuring ethical standards of conduct which are: registration and declaration of interests of members, periodic declaration of their assets, norms for receiving of gifts and hospitalities, norms for advocating specific causes, etc.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat has circulated a self contained paper for use by the Presiding Officers in this Symposium. A few models of Ethics Committees have also been suggested in this paper for favour of your information.

I shall conclude now. On my own behalf and on behalf of all the Presiding Officers, I express my grateful thanks to Hon'ble Shri Virbhadra Singh, Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh for very graciously inaugurating the Symposium, apart from personally monitoring arrangements for the last two days' Conference and today's Symposium as told to me by the Hon'ble Speaker, Himachal Pradesh, Shri Kaul Singh Thakur.

Thank you one and all.

## INDIAN POLITY—PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS\*

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I feel honoured in having been invited today to address this gathering on the subject "India at Fifty: The Polity".

I have had the privilege of working closely with late Shri Rajiv Gandhi as a political worker of the Congress Party as well as a member of his Government. Let me first pay my homage to his memory on this occasion when this publication *Rajiv Gandhi's India* is being released.

The plain meaning of the word 'polity' is "a body of people organised under a system of Government". The people of India formally organised themselves under a new dispensation, under a new form of Government on the 14th of August, 1947 when the Constituent Assembly made a pledge, adopting a Resolution moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. By this pledge, the nation placed before itself, a three-point Agenda — dedication to service of India and her people; securing for India a rightful place in the world; and contribution to world peace and welfare of mankind.

In his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech which preceded the pledge, Panditji had also elaborated on what he meant by 'service of India', I quote: "The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over."

It is in this backdrop of the pledge in the Constituent Assembly on 14th August, 1947 that we should introspect on "India at Fifty".

We have, over the years, wielded our Constitution as an instrument to bring about social and economic transformation consistent with the pluralistic nature of our society. We have effected seventy-eight Amendments to the Constitution. Important amongst those include

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\*Speaking on "India at Fifty: the Polity", on the occasion of the release of the publication, *Rajiv Gandhi's India*, New Delhi, (1 December, 1997).

redefinition of our polity into a "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic", emphasizing the unity and integrity of the nation as well; linguistic reorganisation of States; creation of new States and Union territories duly respecting local aspirations; addition of several languages to the Eighth Schedule for securing their development; fine tuning of fundamental rights so as to be consistent with developmental considerations and unity and integrity of the country; grant of precedence to Directive Principles over Fundamental Rights where they come into conflict; addition of provisions enumerating the fundamental duties of the people; scaling down the age for exercise of franchise from 21 to 18 years; providing for non-justiciability of land reforms; inclusion and retention of provisions for affirmative actions in favour of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Communities, Anglo-Indians, etc.; incorporation of anti-defection law; and establishment of the Panchayati Raj System. The last two of these amendments were brought about due to the personal initiative of Rajiv Gandhi.

Since 1952, we have had eleven General Elections apart from over 300 electoral contests at the level of the States. As on date, it is unclear whether we may have to go for the twelfth General Election. If we are considered as the world's largest and successful democracy of the day, it is because we have gone through so many of these elections and have managed to secure fairly smooth transfer of power from time to time. But political stability is increasingly coming under stress. The electoral system that we have been following is that is generally understood as the "first-past-the-post" (FPTP) system, *i.e.* those who get the largest number of votes, though not the majority of votes, get elected. The orthodox theory of electoral systems is that FPTP should facilitate emergence of majoritarian Governments with coherent Opposition. But, in the multi-party system which has developed in our country over the years, this theory is being proved wrong. Hung Legislatures are getting thrown up, coalitions are being tried out. Region and personality based parties are multiplying and getting the upper hand over ideology based and national parties. The situation is being further compounded by the politics of castes and communities and by the politics of exclusion. Today, major national parties are getting excluded from governance either voluntarily or involuntarily on account of resistance by a combination of parties. Long term exclusion politics could result in undesirable and unethical practices and even violence.

Because of our FPTP electoral system, we do have significant disproportionalities between the electoral presence of parties and their share of seats in the Legislatures — that is, the seats held by parties in Legislatures as ratios of total seats in the Legislatures are disproportionately higher or

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lesser than the proportions of the votes polled by them to the total popular votes. In other words, the will of the people even in its broad dimensions is not getting reflected in the membership of the Legislatures. This situation detracts from the concept of representative democracy.

The politics of exclusion combined with trends towards non-representative governance cannot augur well in the long run. We may perhaps take lessons from the scenario of Italian politics during the 1960s — Christian Democracy (DC) seeking alliances with the Socialists and Social Democrats kept the Communist Party (PCI) excluded from governance despite the PCI's strong electoral presence. Radical groups from the Right and the Left alike turned to violence as a means of bringing about change. The far Right organised bombings to draw attention to its demands. The Red Brigades took recourse to political kidnappings as their main tool.

The Anti-Defection Law was introduced by Rajiv Gandhi with the good intent of preventing what had come to be known by those days as the "Aaya Ram Gaya Ram" phenomenon. It is understood that as early as the period between the first General Election in 1952 and 1968, there had been about a thousand cases of defection. Subsequently also, this phenomenon continued, defectors often being rewarded with ministerial berths and otherwise. In fact, proposals for curbing defections had been considered repeatedly in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Lok Sabhas before the Anti-Defection Law was enacted in 1985. Subsequently, in the Eighth through to the Eleventh Lok Sabhas, there have been nineteen splits and mergers of parties in the Parliament and nine cases of disqualification. Based on our past experience of wielding this law, different views are being expressed about it today. Some say, it is basically unethical. The question asked is: how can individual cases of change of party be branded as defection and construed as unethical and illegal while change of parties by one-third of a party in Parliament which is but wholesale defection construed as legal? Some others argue that the Anti-Defection Law is a safety valve needed for facilitating re-alignment of parties in the context of practical politics.

As everybody is aware, the issues of criminalisation of politics, probity and standards in public life and erosion of accountability of all the players in governance have also emerged centre-stage in a very significant manner over the last two years.

In the context of all these problems, the Lok Sabha has been called upon to prepare a neutral, non-political document on electoral reform in general. This is a crucial area which deserves dispassionate examination. In the meantime, proactively the Privileges Committee of the Lok Sabha

has presented a report on ethics and standards after investigating the systems obtaining in major democratic countries of the world.

The experience all over India has been that often political leaders in positions of power, when faced with thorny problems, have tended to seek solutions through the Judiciary. Judicial authorities will naturally go into issues referred to them only in a clinically technical manner. They may not be informed of the realities of the political world. Nor can they be expected to be informed of them. We do have a significant number of experienced and enlightened political leaders who can come together and find solutions to tricky political problems politically. Their good offices should be sought in solving political issues instead of responsibility in this regard being shifted to the judicial authorities and noise being made about judicial activism.

It is about five years since a constitutional foundation was given to the Panchayati Raj system. In the vast country that India is, the only way to deliver services to the people is by implementing this system in letter and spirit because the essence of the system is decentralised administration. I am not sure that political leaders all over India are yet willing to share power at the third tier.

We have, of course, achieved a lot in the developmental front over fifty years. We have achieved food self-sufficiency through Green Revolution; we have created a solid industrial base; in international trade, we have achieved some degree of success in production and exports of value added goods; we have created a vast science and technology infrastructure based on the scientific policy resolution crafted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. We have a scientific and technological manpower which is 3.5 million strong and our scientists and technocrats are in demand in every sophisticated field all over the world.

On the negative side of our developmental balance sheet, Green Revolution has not necessarily meant food security at the house-hold level for millions for sheer want of purchasing power; our agricultural productivity is pretty low; nor have we carried the Green Revolution to vast areas of the country; industrial technologies require emergent updating; machine and human productivity in the industrial sector is also low; there are huge gaps in infrastructure; we are not able to provide opportunities to the best brains of our country; our technical manpower is migrating abroad and in the process we end up subsidising the manpower needs of the industrialised countries; at the same time, even according to official statistics, 36 per cent of our people live below the poverty line, facing acute unemployment and under-employment; women and children are

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subjected to grievous discrimination; and our environment has suffered phenomenal damage. We need to continue service to the people in the Nehruvian sense so that at least the next century is made safe for them.

We also need to survive in the world in the face of the challenge of the market. Our measures to face the challenge through economic liberalisation has been rightly cautious even as justified by the current developments in South-Eastern and East Asian economies. In any case, we cannot resile from the policy of reform because, in essence, it only means efficient use of our national resources and avoidance of wastages which are essential for the sound management of the country's economy.

For more than a decade now, we have been facing extraordinary circumstances; two Prime Ministers have been assassinated; domestic peace has been rudely disrupted in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir by extremist elements, including from across the border; the North-East bristles with problems of insurgency; we have had eight Prime Ministers in about a dozen years, not to speak of the problems confounding the political environment about which I have already made reference; our success in fulfilling items 2 and 3 of the Agenda given to us by Panditji, *viz.* securing for India her rightful place in the world and making contribution to the welfare of mankind depends upon how we handle the future political, economic and social management of our own country. We have miles before we go to sleep.

Thank you for your attention.

## WOMEN AND GOVERNANCE—ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES\*

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I feel honoured in having been invited to this inaugural of the Specialised International Conference on Women and Governance organised as a joint initiative of the UN, the Women's Political Watch and the National Commission for Women.

The female deficit or the issue of missing women is the critical issue in governance today all over the world.

Feminist aspirations have been expressed in various societies since ancient times. They were not, however, developed into a political theory until the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by the famous British social theorist and feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft. This work stressed the equal rights of women, especially the right to education, on the basis of the notion of "personhood". With the emergence of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the middle of the 19th century, feminist ideas reached a wider audience in the form of the so-called "First-Wave Feminism". By the early 20th century, female suffrage was achieved in most Western countries. It was achieved in very many other countries of the world in different years during the present century. The 1960s witnessed the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). It brought in its wake the "Second-Wave Feminism". Since the 1970s, there has been a "Third-Wave Feminism", if I can put it like that. Four World Women's Conferences have been held, seeking empowerment of women and attempting to establish strategies for achieving the same. The underlying motive force behind the feminist waves has been the thought that society is characterised by sexual or gender inequality and that the structure of male power should be overturned. In the Specialised Inter-Parliamentary Conference hosted by India in February, 1997, one of the distinguished delegates even called for a "She-revolution". The objective of these waves has been one of enhancing the social, political and legal role and status of women.

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\*Speaking on "Governance : Critical Issues, Challenges and Strategies for Action", at the Specialised International Conference on "Women and Governance", New Delhi, (29 September, 1997).

According to the UNICEF publication entitled *The Progress of the Nations* brought out this year, I quote: "Bureaucracy has traditionally been a male preserve, and while women are slowly inching their way into government positions, the number of women at senior decision-making levels remains pathetically low. Discrimination against women can end only when there is a sea-change in attitudes, when women's inferior status at all levels of society — economic, social and political — is recognized as a travesty and not the norm" (unquote). The statistical data of women in governance as in January, 1996 presented in this publication are revealing. These are:

Ministerial positions held by women globally	7 per cent
Within this seven per cent—	
Women Ministers in social category (holding portfolios in the areas of social affairs, education, health and family, etc.)	14 per cent
Law and Justice	10 per cent
Economic category	4 per cent
Executive	4 per cent
Political ministerial positions	3 per cent

Even in governance, wherever women access it, they get peripheral positions and get marginalised.

For enhancing the profile of women in governance, strategic objectives and critical areas of concern have already been spelt out in the Beijing Platform for Action, following the Fourth World Women's Conference, 1995. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has also established a Plan of Action a little earlier in 1994 for the purpose. I shall only refer to issues that seem to me to be somewhat crucial.

If women are to play any significant role in governance, they should themselves undergo a change of attitudes. While male-female disparity does exist in a significant way at all levels of education in India, it has also been found that the number of women accessing professional courses — engineering, chartered accountancy, law, business management, etc. — is on the increase. One tracer survey of women business management graduates has shown that while five per cent of them continued to work after initial entry in employment, twenty-five per cent turned entrepreneurs and seventy per cent were just "nesting", with little intention of returning to working life. The moral of the story is that mere access to education

or even employment is not adequate. Retention of women in employment is equally important, if not more. This issue of retention needs to be addressed, as what seems to be lacking is the transformation of women's attitudes in the matter of continuing to hold positions of responsibility outside homes. Social factors, including at the family level, militating against women's continued retention in places of work, also have to be identified and addressed. One obvious factor is the problem of harmonising work and family responsibilities. The OECD has been quoted in this context by the International Labour Organisation in one of its recent publications which I shall repeat here. I quote :

Life is organised around an implicit social contract. Its two components, the gender contract and the employment contract, define the current division of family and labour market roles. Within the gender contract, women assume the bulk of family care and domestic functions, while men are ascribed primary responsibility for the families — economic or social well-being. The employment contract reinforces this division of labour by defining as its norm the sole bread winner in continuous, full time, life long employment. The social contract conflicts with the new reality of men's and women's lives. (unquote)

With increasing awareness generation, gender sensitisation and with increasing draft of women from households to places of work, men also will have to readjust themselves to the changing scenario. This readjustment would call for sharing of family responsibilities by men as well.

Political parties themselves should practise and promote equal partnership for women in political participation — in enrollment of members, giving positions in party hierarchies, giving training to them in political work at all levels, in offering candidatures for elections, in meaningfully financing candidatures and electoral contests and in giving ministerial positions, including with weighty portfolios.

The challenge of securing women's participation in governance is not also a matter of *ad hoc* actions taken from time to time; nor is it a mere matter of establishing national and sub-national level institutions. Effort for the purpose should become an integral part of a style of functioning in which women's concerns will be addressed proactively. We already have some striking examples. In the United Kingdom, at the Government level, a Women's Policy Network (WP) has been established. It operates at the official level in individual Government Departments and continues to

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review policies in the light of the global Platform for Action. This apart, policy appraisal systems have also been introduced to continuously identify current policy decisions, evaluate their impact and make adjustments as may be considered appropriate. In Canada, through a federal plan for gender equity, women's perspectives are continuously attempted to be incorporated in governance.

It became clear in the Media Round Table organised as part of the New Delhi Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics that the Media is generally inclined to play only a limited role in respect of women's partnership in politics, as in respect of any other issue, *i.e.* the Media is inclined only to reflect the *status quo* as it is, leaving it to the concerned agencies to deal with the matter. The media, being a very powerful opinion maker, in my opinion, could undertake a more proactive role in opinion formation conducive to enhancement of women's profile in governance.

It is needless for me to specifically refer to the crucial role that the Non-Governmental Organizations can and should play. Indeed, even the current International Specialized Conference has been at the initiative of Women's Political Watch which is a Non-Government initiative.

One question that is being repeatedly debated all over the world and which, I am sure, will be discussed in this Conference as well, is statutory reservation of positions for women in legislative bodies. This remains an issue of controversy. Many countries believe that reservation may not be an effective modality. Many would want reservation through mandatory political party mechanisms and processes. Currently, in India, there are apprehensions that elitism may set in if statutory reservations for women are made for access to legislative bodies. And, there are demands for fine tuning the modalities of reservation. There cannot be hide-bound universal prescriptions. Each country and each society may have to work out its own modalities and strategies. But one thing is clear. There is a predominant universal desire for gender justice and partnership in the political world in governance.

As I perceive, many battles will have to be fought by women for securing their due partnership in governance. There are enough constituencies amongst men to support women in their battles. In other words, in these battles also, they will have to seek and get partnership from men.

Sometime back in the proceedings of a Seminar organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, I came across an exhortation quoted from an Upanishad. It runs, I quote:

“You are what your deep driving desire is  
As your desire is, so is your will  
As your will is, so is your deed  
As your deed is, so is your destiny”.

I am confident that women will certainly take care of their own destiny. Men are bound to support them.

Jai Hind.

## WOMEN IN TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICS\*

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I am happy to be in your midst this evening to present my views on "Sharing Power for Nation Building". I understand that the subject given to me for my address is in the context of the issue before this national convention, viz. "Women in Transformative Politics".

The subject of the Convention as well as the subject on which I have been asked to share my views are matters of natural and special interest to me. I say so because in Meghalaya, from where I hail, the society is matriarchal. Women truly call the shots. If I were to speak on "sharing power for nation building" in Meghalaya, I may have to speak on empowerment of men. The girl child is very much indulged by my people compared to boys. In fact, girls in my State after getting good education, and becoming quite autonomous, get married away to Bengali boys leaving the poor Garo boys deeply disappointed. And, these boys are demanding reservation of Garo girls for themselves for matrimony!

In the world as a whole, however, people tend to be patriarchal. It is on account of patriarchal attitudes that women are looked upon as the lesser of the species. This is particularly true of our society in India, though we do have stories about great women leaders and, though we have had a woman Prime Minister and women Chief Ministers. It is because of the patriarchal attitudes that there is the so-called "son preference"; female babies are aborted perniciously, pressing technology into service for sex determination; a study of 8000 abortions carried out in Bombay has even reflected that in almost all these cases female foetuses were aborted; and the sex ratio has become adverse to females at 972 females per 1000 males; girls suffer from malnutrition more often than boys. We need to bring about a sea-change in parental behaviour to alter patriarchal attitudes and the dismal consequences arising therefrom.

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\*At the National Convention on "Women in Transformative Politics" organised by the Mahila Dakshata Samiti, New Delhi, (28 November, 1997).

Education is yet another important area where women have to be prepared. The name of the organisers of this Convention is "Mahila Dakshata Samiti". Dakshata in Hindi means proficiency, competence, efficiency, etc. It is through education that women could be equipped with proficiency. What is the scenario of education of women in India? It is one of discrimination all the way. In the age group of 6 to 10 years, only 45 per cent of girls attend schools against 55 per cent boys. In the age group of 11 to 13 years, the percentages are 54 and 72, respectively. Out of every 100 girls joining class I, only 10 reach the secondary level. Without education, women can't acquire employable skills and don't have independent means of income and power that goes with it. They get relegated to household activities. They get married rather early in life with long fertility periods. They give birth to larger number of children, thus accentuating the problem of population growth.

Even if women acquire education and jobs, they drop out from jobs because of household compulsions. Women administrators, managers and officers account for less than 3 per cent in the country. In the Administrative Service, women constitute 9 per cent, in the IFS about 11 per cent and in the Police Service less than 1 per cent. In the Lok Sabha, there are only 39 women members, *i.e.* only about 7 per cent of the strength of the House. In the last General Elections, only about 600 were women candidates out of a total of about 14,000 candidates — about 4 per cent. The entire scenario of education of women and their access to skills, jobs and positions of authority and power has to be altered too.

We have contributed to influencing world thinking and approaches to the problem of empowerment of women by actively participating in all the four U.N. World Conferences on Women. We were in the forefront to endorse the Beijing Platform for Action. We have also taken up necessary follow-up action by drafting a National Policy on Empowerment of Women. This National Policy is to be brought under implementation in quick time. Otherwise we will only be indulging in double talk, *i.e.* on the one hand boast of our constitutional provisions, national laws, policies, etc. to protect women, but on the other hand fail in bringing our practices in conformity with all these instruments on empowerment of women.

We often take pride in saying that we have reserved one-third of positions in Panchayati Raj Institutions for women. But, the impression that is going around, possibly true, is that it is the spouses of these women who are really controlling the Panchayati Raj Institutions behind the scene. Why should this happen? It is because women have not been trained. Systematic training should be organised.

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We have, of course, introduced the 81st Constitutional Amendment for reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. Differences have since cropped up regarding the shape of this Amendment amongst different political parties. Elsewhere in the world, we do have statutory quotas for women like in Italy, Brazil, Argentina, etc. In countries like Belgium, the electoral law demands that political parties should field stipulated number of women candidates. Political parties can also adopt informal quotas for women as parliamentary candidates. This seems to be the most common mechanism in the world to promote women's participation in political life. Such informal arrangements exist in South Africa, Bolivia, Mexico, Australia, United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries. Because of the effective implementation of the "women only candidate" system by the British Labour Party during the current year's election, the strength of the women MPs in the House of Commons has doubled from the old level of sixty. In the context of our country, we should indeed pursue the 81st Constitutional Amendment, particularly considering the low levels of literacy of women. If we are to wait until the status of women's education is improved to satisfactory levels, I am afraid we may have to wait for long. We cannot afford this wait.

Provision of access for women to positions in Legislatures immediately, as well as the improvement of women's status in general in the long-term perspective, should necessarily be concurrent. Formal and informal arrangements for women's participation in political life at party levels can also be undertaken concurrently. Indeed, party level actions would also be supportive measures to translate statutory quotas into effective reality.

Lastly, in the changing societal scenario in the country, especially in the context of increasing rates of work participation by women, men themselves need to be trained to accept household responsibilities in greater measure than ever before. Otherwise, despite all our systematic efforts at the empowerment of women and their preparation for participation in nation-building activities, women will continue to be bogged down as home-birds.

I am grateful to one and all of you in the Mahila Dakshata Samiti as well as in this Convention in having given me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Jai Hind.

## POVERTY, POPULATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT—THEIR CLOSE INTERLINKAGES\*

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I am happy to be here at this Round Table organised by the Society for International Development and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development.

It is about a year since the United Nations observed its Golden Jubilee by conducting the World Summit for Social Development. Elimination of poverty and of social exclusion was one of the themes of this Summit. It has been estimated that, as of now, more than one-fifth of the world population live below the poverty line. The iniquity is so glaring that this one-fifth shares only about 1.5 per cent of World Gross National Product. Poverty leads to iniquitous social exclusion, in-country and out-country migration, political instability, terrorism, etc. This, indeed, has been the rationale of the theme of the World Social Summit.

When we became independent, we were 400 million. After five decades, we have been in the direction of proving Malthus right. The growth rate of population is 2.1 per cent. We are adding about 18 million to our stock every year. Our present stock is about a billion — twenty per cent of the world population. This size, of course, is stunning. In demography, the quality of population is as important as the size. How do we assess the quality? There are significant parameters of assessment. These are:

- The age structure
- Sex structure
- Fertility ratio
- Birth rates juxtaposed to death rates
- Literacy
- Unemployment rate

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\*At the inauguration of "A Round Table on Population, Poverty and Sustainable Development", New Delhi, (19 December, 1996).

The simple law of demography is that as living conditions improve death rate comes down. Birth rate also should come down. But it comes down slower than death rate. So, in the initial phase, there is an increase in population. As living conditions continue to improve, birth rate also comes down and population growth rate stabilises at a lower equilibrium. This is what we commonly understand as demographic transition. It is this transition which can bring about sustainable development. It is this sustainable development which, in turn, brings about demographic transition. We have had economic growth. But our overall living conditions have not been significantly improving. Our economic growth has not necessarily equitably trickled down. Attitudinally, in very many parts of the country, large families continue to be construed as economic assets.

In our country, those upto the age of 15 years and above 60 years of age are about 370 million. They account for 44 per cent of the population. This reflects a very high dependency ratio and adversely affects production. It results in imbalance between generation of wealth on the one hand and its sharing and distribution on the other. It renders development unsustainable.

Women constitute about 50 per cent of our population. Because of patriarchal attitudes, they stand seriously discriminated in terms of access to nutrition, health, education, skill, employment, income and wealth. Hence our concerted efforts at empowering them through affirmative actions.

Reduction of fertility rate is vital in reducing and containing birth rates. We have, of course, been attempting to make organised efforts over the years to deal with this problem. Resources are being deployed for the purpose from national and multilateral sources. While the overall fertility rate has been brought down to 3.5 births per woman, there are wide disparities among the States. We are still far away from getting the governmental tag removed from family welfare programmes. They are looked upon as governmental programmes implemented for the sake of the Government. Urge from the people themselves is yet to come spontaneously and universally in all parts of the country. If Thailand could reduce fertility rate in less than a decade much faster, we can learn lessons from this example. The solution, perhaps, lies not so much in incentives and disincentives for family welfare activities, but in sustained commitment to create awareness and education, supported by provision of a wide range of services as well as methods through an efficient delivery system.

As I have already mentioned, the rate of growth of population is 2.1 per cent. But labour force has been growing faster at 2.5 per cent. Growth rate of employment is lesser than that of labour force, only 2.2 per cent.

Unemployment, as of now, is over 20 million. By the turn of the century, it is projected to be about 100 million.

The overall literacy rate is 52 per cent, female literacy being much lesser, at about 39 per cent.

Unemployment rate is of the order of six per cent. It is higher in major States like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

It is in the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the problem of our population which I have presented that the problem of our poverty has to be understood.

According to the estimates of the Planning Commission (1993-94), people living below poverty line, earning less than about Rs. 230 p.m. in rural areas and less than about Rs. 264 p.m. in urban areas constitute 19 per cent of the population. This is based on projections made with reference to the fiftieth round of the National Sample Survey. The estimates based on the earlier 48th round of Survey was about 30 per cent. Based on a different methodology of estimate, an expert group appointed by the Planning Commission has put the figure of those living below poverty line at 39 per cent. Estimates of this nature do not necessarily help us in understanding the various dimensions of poverty. The poverty estimates of the Planning Commission are based on household consumption expenditure. The resource for consumption expenditure are dependent upon several variables, not merely earned income. Consumption could also be dependent upon debts incurred. Debt-based consumption is of a more depressing character.

Unemployment and under-employment are self-perpetuating in nature. These factors will prevent access to nutrition and health. This will have an adverse impact on cognitive capabilities and hence on skill development through education. This, in turn, will lead to unemployability. The phenomenon is, in fact, a vicious circle. It is in this context that satisfaction of basic needs as a doctrine of development policy becomes relevant. The minimum requirements of food, clothing and minimum household necessities have to be provided. Healthy drinking water, sanitary facilities, public means of transportation and health and educational facilities will all be included in the basic needs.

The challenge of poverty is one of redirection of public resources; of significant investments in the social sector — that is, in nutrition, health, education and skilled development; of investment in the human being. Resistance for redirection of public resources comes from sectors from where such redirection is effected. This, indeed, is the challenge of public policy which popular Governments have to face when they liberalise their economies so as to get value for scarce resources.

In the context of satisfaction of basic needs, food security is especially important. No doubt, revolution in agricultural and food processing technologies has triggered revolution in food front. Consequent Green Revolution, White Revolution and Blue Revolution have contributed, respectively, to quantum jumps in production of foodgrains, of milk and milk products and fish and fishery products. But, there are limits to these revolutions and to technology based increases in productivity and production at the margin. Otherwise, the Food and Agricultural Organisation would not have been over-worked about concerns of food security.

While sustainable development should be construed as a function of satisfaction of basic needs, it should be understood that population explosion has its serious implications for environment as well. It seriously distorts the carrying capacity of land, water, flora and fauna. A study of the last five decades of developmental history of almost every State of India would bring home how population pressure has brought about deforestation, extinction of the natural habitat of wild life, soil erosion, drying up of water resources, in-country migrations, growth of urban slums, disruption of environmental sanitation and spasms of diseases and even epidemics. It is in the context of these phenomena experienced the world over that the United Nations Conference on Population and World Development in 1994 called for a balance between human population density and the supporting capacity of land, water, flora and fauna. Developmental strategies without this balance cannot be sustainable.

There is no better way for me to conclude my address on the theme of this Round Table than by quoting the Bruntland Commission which defined "sustainable development" as development that satisfies the needs of the current generation "without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" and as "a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs".

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

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you.

Jai Hind.

## POPULATION, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT\*

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I am immensely pleased to attend this Second Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians in this beautiful city of Islamabad.

As we are at the threshold of the next millennium, politically the world has become almost unipolar. National economies are getting globalised. Ideologies have been virtually put on the back-burner and market has become the *mantra*. The challenge of the market is being met by regional integration processes.

Our region accounts for 3.3 per cent of the world's land surface but a population of 1.2 billion, which is 20 per cent of world population. Our contribution to world income is only 1.3 per cent. We are adding more than a Scandinavia to world population every year. We are the abode for nearly half of the world's illiterate and about 160 million malnourished children. Income inequities in our societies are unconscionable. We need to introspect on our current status in the world, take stock of our weaknesses, strengths and complementarities and make sustained efforts at prosperity through cooperation.

Our main weakness, however, is not the size of our population by itself but the alarming rate of its growth. We should contain it and force the pace of demographic transition.

We need to turn our population into our asset, into a source of our power. How do we do this? By providing our people food security, nutrition, health and employment oriented education; by making them economically productive and thereby vesting them with purchasing power. The developed countries are on a scramble for markets, because they have saturated their own. And, we are the market, provided only we give our people the means of acquiring purchasing power.

We do have enormous natural resource endowments. We have to prudently use the same for generation of wealth. This calls for sound

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\*At the inaugural of the Second Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, Islamabad, (26 October, 1997).

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management which, indeed, is the crux of the economic reform processes. If we generate wealth, we can raise internal resources to sustain our progress. We need not be unduly dependent upon external assistance. Imprudent dependence on foreign assistance can only lead to neo-colonialism through the economic route, apart from loss of self-respect in the world community.

Prudent economic management calls for enlightened political management at the national, bilateral and multilateral levels. There does not seem to be any alternative to make economic progress neutral to politics.

International trade is a proven strategy for economic growth. We should concentrate in this area, keeping aside our political differences for the moment. We should make South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) a reality.

The first objective of our Association is achieving "mutual understanding, trust and friendship amongst the peoples of the SAARC countries". I would emphasise "mutual trust" as the foremost requirement for our collective progress through cooperation.

We have taken several initiatives under the SAARC umbrella. Parliamentarians being representatives of the people, through this forum, can effectively promote SAARC solidarity in their constituencies and contribute to the success of all these initiatives. Their support to SAARC initiatives is the surest way of vesting all SAARC initiatives with greater legitimacy. They also need to take common positions in all international fora.

On my own behalf and that of my Delegation, I place on record my deep appreciation of His Excellency President Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari in having graciously inaugurated this Conference.

Thank you for your attention.

## PEOPLE, PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE\*

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I am pleased to be at the inaugural of this National Seminar.

I compliment the organisers of the Seminar on their thoughtfulness in designing the subject of discussion. The subject presents productivity in the human context — in the context of people and quality of life.

The story of mankind, in essence, has been a story of struggle for life. In this struggle, production of goods and services and their exchange have been regular phenomena. People have competed in the process to achieve prosperity. And, an inevitable instrument of achieving prosperity through competition has been productivity.

In today's world, the forces of competition have been unleashed like never before. Centrally planned economies are opting for the market in one style or the other and are in various stages of transition. Regulated economies are getting de-regulated. The underlying *mantra* is excelling in productivity to compete better.

If productivity, competition and struggle for life are to be seen in the perspective of quality of life, a fact which should hit us on the face is that today 1.3 billion people in the world live in abject poverty earning less than a dollar a day. Seventy per cent of them are women.

The primary requirement for enhancing productivity is, of course, vesting people with technology — whether it be in the farm or the factory or the service area. The Green Revolution in India would not have been feasible without the introduction of the high yielding varieties technology. Now we are applying the tissue culture technology to improve several farming activities. In manufacturing, we have engaged the tools of energisation, automation and computerisation.

If technology is to be applied, the human being has to be trained. Skills have to be imparted to the job seeker and continuous education provided to those in service. These necessities would call for the

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\*At the inauguration of the Seminar on "People, Productivity and Quality of Life", New Delhi, (25 November, 1997).

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establishment of a system of education which is relevant to the world of employment and also for a corporate culture of investing on human resource development through continuous education and multi-skilling.

It is world experience that technological upgradation has not necessarily improved employment opportunities. For example, application of high yielding varieties technology in production of rice has significantly reduced employment in traditional operations like ploughing and harvesting because of automation, though per person productivity has increased because of the conjunct application of manpower and machine power. Robots are also being successfully engaged these days in manufacturing activities, replacing the human being. Field researches have also brought out that increased productivity in the manufacturing sector in industrialised countries has been on account of replacement of the human being by sophisticated machines, which has enhanced redundancies in manpower without updated skills and which has depressed the wage levels and purchasing capability of such manpower. This has also been identified as one of the reasons which caused recession in industrialised countries, that is, on account of induced structural unemployment and under-employment.

These experiences should bring home to us that productivity concerns should be addressed side by side with the concerns of human development and employment.

Artisanal employment in rural industries in India suffers from outdated production processes characterised by use of crude tools and equipment. The consequences are low productivity, low quality, low marketability of products and occupational drudgery. Very simple measures like provision of improved tools and training in their use could bring about a sea-change in the rural industrial sector. Improved productivity, quality and marketability of artisanal products will also help in checkmating in-country migration from rural to urban areas taking place in a large scale.

Systematic extension of new production processes and equipment capable of yielding higher productivity is an area which has to be given careful attention. We in India have implemented several developmental programmes for introduction of new tools and equipment and production techniques. But, extension activity for popularising the same has not always followed with the result that no perceptible change has occurred in the working community. I can quote the example of a variety of simple carpentry tools having been developed with external assistance but not popularised amongst the carpenters. If systematic extension work had been undertaken, it would have made a significant difference to the lot of the worker in terms of the quantity, quality and marketability of their products.

Green Revolution was feasible because of systematic extension support. The new techniques became popular because of the spread effect of extension. Workers learn from one another. Even if a few are exposed to new techniques through extension, it is emulated by others.

I believe, and have repeatedly emphasised, that sustainable economic development can be brought about only through generation of wealth and not by mere distribution of existing wealth. There are limits to the processes of levelling down and excessive levelling down could lead only to distribution of poverty. If wealth is to be generated, in the production establishments, wages should be linked to productivity beyond certain basic levels. Indeed, we have very successful examples in India of smooth industrial relations being maintained by employers by establishing productivity-linked wage regimes. These examples need to be universalised.

Of course, productivity-linked wage structures can go wrong and can even be abused if the productivity and incentive norms are unrealistic. If the norms are too lax, the productivity scheme will not serve its purpose because, effectively, higher wage bills will have to be picked up for existing or marginally increased levels of production. If the norms are excessive, the labour could end up getting exploited.

We often refer to enhancement of labour productivity as if it were a stand-alone phenomenon. Labour can only yield as much productivity as the machine conditions would facilitate. In the textile industry in India, for example, the eternal grievance of the working people is that their wages are linked to productivity but productivity norms are much higher than the condition of machines would justify. I have often found that this is true. Managements have to invest on maintenance, including preventive maintenance of machines, such that the operatives can physically fulfill the productivity norms. Indeed, labour productivity and machine productivity are two sides of the same coin.

Productivity has implications for working as well as external environment. In new production processes designed to enhance productivity, attention would need to be given to guard against occupational safety hazards and lodgment of pollutants in open environment.

Productivity should also be construed in the larger community sense. For example, recycling of wastes enhances the productivity of the community as a whole within the existing resources. Wood wastes if used for manufacturing wood-based products, the draft on forest produce could be reduced thereby enhancing protection of forests or at least minimising the pressures on forests.

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I have already mentioned about seventy per cent of the world's poor being women. The productivity of women is no less valuable than that of men. The Conventions of the International Labour Organisation relating to employment of women call for equal wages for work of equal value. These Conventions should be turned into national laws and grassroot practices brought in conformity with such laws.

Let me now thank the World Confederation of Productivity Science (India), World Academy of Productivity Science and Centre for Labour Education & Social Research who have organised this Seminar and also the Seminar co-sponsors in having given me this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on "People, Productivity and Quality of Life". I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Seminar and wish it success.

Thank you all for your kind attention.

## OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM—NEED FOR A PROFESSIONAL FOOTING\*

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I am honoured that I have been called upon to address this Convocation of Visva-Bharati. It is always a matter of pleasure to visit this temple of learning founded by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in serene and sylvan environment. This is the second occasion I am visiting Visva-Bharati in recent times. Earlier on, I had come here for laying the foundation stone for the Programme Generating Centre of *Doordarshan*.

Last December, I had the privilege of being exposed to the elegant capabilities of the students and faculty members of the Visva-Bharati who mounted the “Glimpses of Visva-Bharati—Life and Ethos”, an Exhibition designed specially for the enlightenment of the parliamentarians.

These are days when higher education is plagued by several serious problems — student unrest, teachers’ agitation, non-conformity to academic calendars, etc. The root cause of all these problems is often lack of professionalism. If the educational system is put on a professional footing, we would have made a lasting contribution to the future well-being of our country. How do we achieve this?

Education is not merely a matter of acquiring knowledge and skills from a given syllabus and curriculum. It is one of gaining comprehensive enlightenment through a process of multilateral interface between student and student, teacher and taught, man and woman, place of study and environment, past and present and as between languages, cultures and East and West. It is this kind of enlightenment alone which can lead to an equitable social and economic order based on peace, respect for basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender justice, preservation of nature and human heritage. And a professional system of education should be based on this concept.

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\* Convocation Address at the Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan, (6 February, 1997).

The problem of education in many developing and even some developed countries has been its irrelevance to the world of work. As on date, in our country, the stock of the educated but unemployed is of the order of 7 million. Strange as it may seem, there is greater rate of unemployment amongst the educated than amongst the uneducated. This phenomenon is fundamentally due to education spawning a workforce with unemployable skills. This is what causes the paradoxical co-existence of literacy and unemployment. And, the educated unemployed is the most inflammatory material which causes societal tensions, violence, terrorism and drug addiction. The *mantra* then is, make education economically relevant.

The process of education, whatever be its level, is as important, if not more, as the content of education. Information and communication systems have undergone a sea-change due to the electronic revolution. We are living in an age when knowledge, information, textual materials, academic journals and even lessons and daily news are available, so to say, in quick frozen form on audio and video cassettes and on the Internet for thawing and accessing for which what is required is only operation of a couple of buttons on modern gadgets. It is needless for me to say, in this context, that we should modernise the education process and make it highly enjoyable.

Education is, to a significant extent, a function of the one-to-one relationship between the teacher and the student. The quality of education depends on the quality of the teacher. To transmit knowledge, the teachers themselves should have up-to-date subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Therefore, the teachers should see the students in themselves and equip themselves through a process of life-long and continuous education.

Reform of the examination system is yet another significant aspect of professionalising education. This is a subject on which educationists have debated endlessly and on which volumes have been written. Suffice it to say that examinations should be designed to be concurrent with the process of learning rather than terminal at the end of courses. The objective of examinations should be to test the basic understanding of subjects by the students and should not be viewed as a mechanical ritual.

Every human being is endowed naturally with certain creative capabilities in some respect or the other. The great inventions of the world and great litterateurs, painters and musicians are nature's gift to humanity. It could as well be that, for sheer want of opportunities, the talents of lot many naturally creative persons remain latent and do not get articulated for the benefit of humanity. The role of education is one of generating an environment for these creative capabilities to be articulated by providing opportunities. The system of education would need to be oriented towards this end.

Educational resources — human as well as infrastructure resources — can and should be pressed into service for societal development, particularly rural development. This concept is already part of our educational system in terms of SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work), Rural Social Service, etc. In fact, the National Policy on Education (1986) even envisages establishment of Rural Universities. The idea is that qualified manpower, including students, should transfer modern knowledge and technologies for the economic uplift of the rural people, performing the role of extension and change agents.

The Visva-Bharati symbolises everything I have mentioned. If that is so, it is undoubtedly because of the conceptual genius of Rabindranath Tagore who founded this Institution 75 years ago and the ceaseless efforts of scores of scholars and academics who have preserved the traditions and ideals of the Gurudev. The special accent on classical languages and literature, art and music, involvement in rural life, spirit of inquiry, science and technology, concern for inter-cultural and inter-racial amity and unification of mankind and an urge to modernise are all factors which distinguish the Visva-Bharati from other educational institutions elsewhere in India.

The graduates passing out of this great institution should consider themselves the privileged few amongst the people of India. I am sure that as they settle down in various professions and walks of life, they would make significant contribution to the making of India's future.

I wish all of them success in life and a bright future.

Thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## VALUE EDUCATION AND PRIMACY OF GIRL CHILD\*

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We are a multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation. Hinduism, the religion of the majority, is a way of life. Buddhism, the essence of which is non-violence, originated in our country and spread to other parts of the world — South, South-East and East Asia. Jainism, again with non-violence as its centrality, originated in our country. We have absorbed Christianity from the West and Zoroastrianism from West Asia. We are the second largest Muslim country in the world, about 47 million professing and practising Islamic faith. Our population belongs to six different ethnic groups — Negrito, Austrics, Mongoloids, Dravidian, Western Brachy-Cephal and Nordic Aryans. Our languages also belong to six different families, corresponding to the six ethnic groups. Today, we have more than 1,600 languages used as the mother tongue. Indeed, our country is a synthesis of the very diversity of the world. It is this synthesis which is subsumed in what we generally understand as the composite culture of India. It is a basic value which should be an integral part of education.

Religions are a great source of values. The question whether religious instruction can be a modality for imparting value education has been gone into since the British days, for about 150 years. The British followed a policy of religious neutrality in education. Lord William Bentinck, the famous British Governor-General observed, I quote, “.....The same maxim (neutrality) is peculiarly applicable to general education. In all schools and colleges supported by Government, this principle cannot be too strongly enforced, all interference and injudicious tampering with a system of instruction ought to be positively forbidden” (unquote). Article 28 of the Constitution contains clear provisions against religious instruction. After achieving Independence, however, the Dr. Radhakrishnan Commission — the famous University Education Commission, 1948-49 — noted that

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\*At the Seminar on “Urgency of Value Education and Primacy of Girl Child” organised by the Rashtriya Jagriti Sansthan, New Delhi, (29 September, 1997).

secularism did not mean religious illiteracy. The Commission laid emphasis on daily meditation by students before classes started, study of the lives of great religious leaders, inculcation of the underlying universalism of the scriptures of the world and philosophy of religions. The Sri Prakasa Committee of 1959-60 and the Indian Education Commission of 1964-66 also reflected the views of the Radhakrishnan Commission. The problem of value education through religious instruction in our pluralistic society is what Mahatma Gandhi had perceived as early as 1938. He observed, in the context of the Wardha Plan, that traditional religion was not part of his concept of 'Basic Education' because the manner of its teaching would give rise to conflicts. The content of education devoid of universal values of religions would be seriously deficient. This deficiency in value education in our country has to be made good innovatively. One of the processes of education is provision of what the educationists would call "enrichment material". Books on universal values of religions could be made available in the libraries of educational institutions to be voluntarily accessed by students. The deficiency in this regard in our formal education system would also need to be made good by the homes and communities to which the students belong.

Egalitarianism, in its broad sense, is yet another vital value to be inculcated for any society to be civilised. The values of liberty, equality and fraternity came to be projected the world over since the times of the French Revolution in the 18th century. The Preamble to our Constitution mentions the resolve of the people of India to secure liberty, equality and fraternity for all citizens. Liberty subsumes all that is covered by basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Equality is of status as well as of opportunity. Fraternity implies assuring dignity of the individual and securing the unity and integrity of the nation. The Supreme Court have observed that the term fraternity is not a rhetoric but has a special relevance in our country's context in which, because of the social backwardness of certain sections of the society, they have been subjected to deprivation of, and exclusion from, participation in administration and hence need to be compensated in terms of affirmative actions. The Court have said, I quote, "In a country like ours with so many disruptive forces of regionalism, communalism and linguism...the unity and integrity...can be preserved only by a spirit of brotherhood. India has one common citizenship and every citizen should feel that he is Indian first irrespective of other basis". (unquote)

We have been universally acclaimed as the world's largest and successful democracy. It is our democratic way of life which distinguishes us from many other countries of the world where governance has been

frequently taken over by military and revolutionary adventurists. Democracy as a form of governance is based on sharing of political power, on political inclusion; and, as a way of life it leads to equity and social justice. Hence, democracy as a value needs to be an inevitable part of education at all levels and without interruption.

Our population has been growing at an economically unsustainable pace and beyond the country's carrying capacity. It is estimated that in another three decades, we may become the most populous country in the world. If we would have solved our problem of population growth, we would have solved many of our problems — of food security, nutrition, health, employment, poverty and overall economic development. In tackling this problem, we are not short of resources or technology. We are only short of a conducive attitude. This attitude can be inculcated only through education and generation of awareness regarding "the small family norm".

Our sub-continent is a God given area of phenomenal environmental richness and bio-diversity. But in the process of our developmental efforts, we have caused considerable damage to our environment. Natural forests have been denuded; birds and animals have been deprived of their habitat; rivers have got silted; hills have been razed down and shanty towns have sprung up; estuaries, water fronts and sea waters have been polluted by industrial effluents, endangering marine life; environmental sanitation has been dangerously disrupted by careless life styles. Love of environment and floral and faunal wealth has to be imbibed as a value through education.

One of the basic objectives of education is removal of ignorance and spread of enlightenment. Archaic notions and obscurantism have to be eliminated. For the purpose, education has to be oriented to creation of a spirit of inquiry and scientific temper.

Irrespective of the level of development, societies all over the world are male dominated. The practice of discrimination against women is incredible. Despite constitutional provisions and national laws, discrimination against women is being practised in endless blatant and subtle ways. At the household level, in the society, in Governments, in the place of work and in the political world this discrimination is rampant. Four World Women's Conferences have been held over the last 20 years to establish strategies for empowerment of women. Still, we are far from ending discrimination. What is needed in this respect as well is a basic attitudinal change. Non-discrimination against women and equality of sexes have to be inculcated as a value, commencing from formative years. It is a matter of serious concern that in our country 75 per cent of the children

not enrolled in schools in the age group of six to fourteen are girls. And 80 per cent of illiterate women live in villages which continue to suffer from serious educational infrastructure deficiencies. We should bear in mind the situation portrayed by UNESCO's World Education Report of 1985. I quote: "Women and girls in many of the poorer parts of the world are locked into a cycle of poverty and early marriages, with illiterate mothers bringing up illiterate daughters who are married off early into yet another cycle of poverty, illiteracy, high fertility and early mortality. Breaking up the cycle, it is recognised, requires more than just emotional intervention: comprehensive development that transforms the basic conditions of rural and urban community life is needed" (unquote). In our country, we have a National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000) aimed at removal of disparities between boys and girls. The SAARC countries observed 1990 as the Year of the Girl Child. To sustain the momentum, the years 1991-2000 are being observed as the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child. We should continue to make sustained efforts to make gender an integral part of not merely education but all child development policies and programmes. I would even exhort that an inevitable value and objective to be part of our system of education is creation of a mother-centered society which alone can be humane.

Many of us would be familiar with the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* which means that the whole world is one family. This is a great value, a world view on which international cooperation and peaceful co-existence are based. Violence and terrorism, whether it be of individual against individual or society against individual or State against individual or nation against nation has to be abjured as a matter of conviction. This conviction can come about only by the shaping of the mind and thought processes through education.

All these values I have referred to have been built into the National Policy on Education, 1986 which, for the first time in the history of education in the country, stipulates a National System of Education. It is more than a decade since this Policy was adopted by the Parliament. It would be worthwhile taking stock of the extent to which, and the manner in which, these values are being inculcated.

I compliment the Rashtriya Jagriti Sansthan in having organised this Golden Jubilee Seminar. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Seminar.

Jai Hind.

## EDUCATION AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT\*

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Let me first felicitate the Department of Education of the University of Delhi on its Golden Jubilee Celebrations. I am honoured to be associated with the celebrations. Thank you for the very kind invitation.

Five decades ago, about 50 million people of our country were literate. Today, we have about 200 million illiterates. This is despite the number of literates having increased to 350 million. There has, no doubt, been expansion in education over these years. But in absolute numbers, the size of the illiterate community continues to be gigantic and growing. Population has been growing at an annual rate of 2.1 per cent. Along with that, the number of those needing literacy and education has been increasing. Educational infrastructure — that is, schools, teachers, teaching-learning material, equipment — has been expanding too. But the expansion has not been adequate, not keeping pace with the needs. Inadequate educational infrastructure reflect in sub-standard education as well. Retention in educational institutions is low, getting reflected in high drop-out rates. While the gross enrollment at the primary level is more than 100 per cent. 40 per cent of enrolled children drop out at the primary level itself. Out of every 100 children entering class I, only 60 complete primary education (upto class V), only 42 complete middle level (upto class VIII) and only 30 complete class X (secondary level). Large numbers of school drop-outs swell the ranks of the illiterate. Inter-State disparities in literacy are rather sharp. We dismally lag behind the Far Eastern and South-East Asian countries. The most disturbing aspect of the country's educational system is that it has evolved, though not out of design, into a dual system — one for the rich and another for the poor. On the one hand, all over India, we have state of the art public schools; on the other, we have schools and classes accommodated under trees and tents.

One week back, on the 10th of December, 1997, the world has started observing the "1998 Human Rights Year", this year being the Fiftieth

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\*Valedictory Address at the Convention on "Education as a Fundamental Right" organised by the Department of Education, New Delhi, (18 December, 1997).

Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The theme of the year is "All Human Rights for All".

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has been ratified by India says, I quote :

(1) Everyone has the right to Education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and the fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit; (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace; (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (unquote).

Article 45 of our Constitution, consistent with the Universal Declaration, provides for free and compulsory universal elementary education within ten years. Article 45 is a directive to the State. It is expected to be acted upon as a matter of public policy by the State. Not being justiciable in courts of law, the right to free and compulsory elementary education cannot, as of now, be legally enforced as a Fundamental Right. Having ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we have recognised education as a human right, but we have not yet made it a justiciable Fundamental Right.

In 1993, having gone into the nature of Article 45, the Supreme Court of India has observed and enquired, I quote : "It is noteworthy that among the several Articles in Part IV only Article 45 speaks of a time limit. The question remaining: can the State flout the said direction? Does not the passage of 44 years convert the obligation into an enforceable right?"

In all the States in India, education at the elementary level has been made free. In fact, in certain States, free education is being offered even at higher levels. In many States, a number of incentives are also being offered for children to attend schools — like uniforms, chappals, learning materials, mid-day meals, etc. Nonetheless, the educational scenario in the country is what I have already presented. This leads us to the question whether we can legally enforce the right to compulsory elementary education. Indeed, eighteen States in India have enacted compulsory education laws. Thirteen of them provide for compulsory education only up to class V and five of them, of course, up to class VIII. But as far as I understand, these laws are not under any meaningful implementation. The reason obviously is that parents whose children don't go to schools

cannot be imprisoned or fined as envisaged in the penal provisions of the laws. This situation is possibly to be accounted for by the corrective authority of the State being ineffective in the phase of the incredible socio-economic problems faced by the people — barriers of attitude, poverty, deprivation and struggle for survival. Can we, then, forcibly round up the children begging along road sides and grinding themselves in work places and put them in schools even as stray cattle are impounded? May be, we could do this if there is societal awakening and political conviction. In my place in the State of Meghalaya, the first school was started by the community, that too for girls.

In the present context of our country, universalisation of elementary education cannot be looked upon merely as a matter of enactment of laws, their enforcement and other technicalities. This is not to say that laws are not needed. All the States which have not enacted the compulsory education law should enact them because that would be reflective of the expression of the political will of the Government of the day. That would help in sending the proper signals to the people and at least marking the commencement of creation of an overall conducive environment.

Concurrently, a number of enabling measures should also be undertaken. The very basic measure which can yield results in the medium and long term is, of course, population education. This would speed up demographic transition and help in bringing down the growth in the number of children to be sent to schools.

There is need for a sea-change in the attitudes of the people about which I have referred earlier. What are these attitudes? First, of course, is the attitude that sending children to work, apart from bringing in some marginal income for the family, is a more effective method of preparing them for their future than sending them for education. Second, comes the attitude of discrimination against the girl child — the feeling that boys may be preferred to girls in sending them to schools, if at all. This is essentially a patriarchal attitude, a male chauvinistic attitude due to which girls are seen only in the role of future mothers to be confined to households. Then, there is the attitude of pessimism arising from the apprehension that girls out in the world of education outside households are not safe. Each one of these attitudes has to be addressed.

How do we address the attitudes? Of course, systematic awareness generation programmes have to be undertaken involving the community as well as the community leaders.

That children, if sent to work, are in a position to bring marginal incomes for the household, as far as I understand, is not necessarily a

compelling thought with the parents. What is truly compelling is their perception of the present kind of education as being totally worthless. They feel that it is largely irrelevant to the world of work. They also believe that children would acquire employable skills if they go to work, even though sending them to work may not be the right thing to do. If we are to change this attitude, we have to improve the quality of education. Mahatma Gandhi's *Buniyadi Shiksha* or Basic Education was work-oriented education. We have to take out from our dusty shelves, literature on the Mahatma's prescription for education and try to implement them, giving up our unending urge to create new Committees and Commissions to study the educational system. We should try to take leaf from countries like South Korea and Japan and see how they make education compulsory by making it attractive and indispensable in terms of its worthwhileness. There are certain other measures also urgently needed to make our education worthwhile.

Earlier, I mentioned about schools being accommodated under trees and tents. We need to make investments in providing adequate number of schools as well as adequate space in individual schools.

Nearly one-third of the primary schools in the country are single-teacher schools. Another one-third have only two teachers. This adversely impacts on teacher-pupil ratio and consequently on the quality of education. The stock of teachers should be enhanced.

Attendance in schools by teachers — particularly in the rural areas — has also been a perennial problem. Very often, it is reported, teachers just don't turn out in schools. If teachers don't mark their presence, how can children be expected to? It is here that community action becomes very important. Local communities should organise themselves strongly and carry on a national movement, as it were, to curb this tendency of teachers' absence in schools.

Teachers have to be trained as well to improve the quality of education imparted. About fifteen per cent of the primary and middle level teachers are untrained. This deficiency should be rectified.

The load of the school bag is an eternal subject of discussions in the country. I won't go into this problem because those who contribute to this problem can themselves resolve it, I mean the educational planners. I would, however, like to emphasize that learning materials should be attractive to children — load of the language being taken away, pictures and graphics being given a lot of importance.

Patriarchal attitudes are based on mind-sets. And, mind-sets will change only as people get exposed to education. This is not a matter for which a solution could be found overnight because education is a continuous process and not a one-shot effort. No doubt, we need to continue our efforts in this regard through the Adult Education route as well.

Patriarchal attitudes towards girls are also motivated by a certain feeling of protectiveness. This feeling of protectiveness can be met in case we are able to provide adequate number of female teachers in schools. Across the board, at the primary, middle, high and higher secondary levels, female teachers constitute only one-third of the total number of teachers in the country, though teaching is the largest single avenue of employment preferred by women. Female teachers, in their turn, find it insecure to work in out-stations without proper residential accommodation. Such accommodation will have to be necessarily provided.

If school buildings are to be adequate in number and space, if adequate number of teachers are to be provided and they are to be trained and if attractive learning materials have to be provided, resources become very important. There is a commitment that six per cent of the GDP will be invested in education as against the present level of 3.8 per cent. As far as I understand, this figure of six per cent was suggested by the Kothari Commission towards the end of the 1960s. The entire issue of the level of investment in education should also be brought under microscope and proactive measures taken to provide the same. We should also carefully examine the reported wastages in the implementation of the on-going incentive schemes and loopholes should be plugged.

Right to work has also been provided for, as per Article 41, as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy in our Constitution. This right will not translate into reality unless at the base level elementary education is not universalised as envisaged in Article 45.

Having been a teacher myself before I entered politics, I am emotionally involved in the subject of this Convention. My impulse is to continue on the subject. But I don't want my emotion and impulse to translate into an ordeal for you, particularly as this is a valedictory function. I hope that the outcome of this Convention will provide policy inputs for the University as well as the Government in the matter of improving our education significantly. Thank you once again for your invitation. I wish the Department of Education of the Delhi University many more Jubilees through its service to the people of India.

## NORTH-EAST—GOD'S OWN PLACE\*

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It has always been a matter of pleasure for me to participate in the programmes of the India International Centre. My reason is simple. The Centre is an intellectual exchange. I am happy, and feel honoured, to be part of it. However, I suspect that I am becoming too frequent an invitee. I hope that this frequency does not detract from the reputed richness and diversity of the Centre's lead speakers.

The subject of today's Seminar is : "My Vision of the North-East". I like the title. The problem of the North-East is, indeed, people's vision about it, the lack of it. I have often noticed in meetings of decision-makers that they vaguely grope to specifically locate the North-Eastern States when the country's map is spread before them.

For the sake of providing simple factual information and clarity, let me first state that the North-East is land locked and consists of seven States (the 'Seven Sisters' as they are often referred to), viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh were carved out of Assam and constituted into separate States.

The North-East has a much longer international border than it has with the other States within the country — about 1100 Kms with China, 500 Kms with Bhutan, 1700 Kms with Myanmar and 1200 Kms with Bangladesh. The region shares only 2 per cent of its border with the rest of the country.

The ethnic identity of the region is well known; there are about 200 tribes in the region, speaking as many languages.

The population of the region as a whole is about 32 million — larger than that of the individual States of Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa and Punjab. Alone in terms of the size of the population, we can ill-afford to neglect the region.

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\*At the Seminar on "My Vision of the North-East", New Delhi, (20 April, 1997).

The region is rich in natural resources — forests, coal, natural gas, hydel potential, limestone, dolomite, etc.

The agro-climatic conditions of the region hold out exciting potential for diversified farming activities covering annual and perennial crops, including horticultural and plantation crops.

Barring Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Assam (for which data are not available), the male as well as female literacy rates in the region are generally much higher than the national average. Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura have registered, respectively, literacy rates of 82 per cent, 62 per cent and 60 per cent as against the national average of 52 per cent.

Excepting for the States of Assam and Tripura, all the North-Eastern States have registered a much higher women's work participation rate than the All India average. It ranges from 35 per cent to 44 per cent against the All India average of 22 per cent. In the rural areas, this work participation rate ranges from 39 per cent to 47 per cent against the All India average of 27 per cent.

The problems of the North-East largely stem from its geographical isolation, being land-locked, ethnic difference, tribal and linguistic diversities and, of course, from its geographical interface with four other nations.

It is these ground truths regarding the peculiarities of the region and its resource endowments, natural, physical and human, that should throw light for a vision for its future.

The geographical isolation of the region needs to be terminated. This can be brought about by thoughtful development of infrastructure cutting across State boundaries within the region and linking the region with the rest of the country.

Internally, within the region which covers 4 per cent of the landmass of the country, people remain isolated in habitations without mutual access. Surface transport within the region through a network of inter-State, intra-State and link roads and rail routes needs to be developed. This is also the felt need of the people as reflected in the regional demand before the Planning Commission.

Already, border trade with Myanmar stands opened up. Moreh in Manipur and Champai in Mizoram have come to be established as open border points providing trade access to Myanmar market. In order to reinforce this, an international road route from Imphal to Mandalay needs to be developed.

The Brahmaputra should not be seen only as the sorrow of the region. It is the region's lifeline too. There is an already existing national waterway of

about 900 Kms on the Brahmaputra. This needs to be transformed into a vibrant commercial artery. A network of modern inland water terminals from where surface transport could take off to adjoining States have to be developed.

Through bilateral diplomatic and commercial dialogues with Bangladesh, Chittagong would need to be developed as an international port linked by an international corridor of 20-25 Km. from Tripura border. This would provide quicker access to the vibrant ASEAN market.

A grid of air services could be established with Guwahati as the base station. More than a dozen stations can easily be identified in the various States of the region from Pasighat in the North to Agartala in the South and Guwahati in the West to Dimapur in the East. And those stations could be serviced by a mix of large and small aircraft and helicopters.

Shifting cultivation has been a bane of the region, lands being community owned and there being no fixity of holdings flowing from proprietary rights. Traditional practices die hard. Innovative strategies have to be evolved to terminate such practices. When I was Chief Minister, Meghalaya, I introduced plantation crops, rubber, cashew, coconuts, etc. Being perennial crops, wherever they have been introduced, shifting cultivation has ended. People have come to experience the benefits in terms of returns as well as protection of soil cover.

A carefully worked out strategy of industrialisation specific to the regional resource endowments has to be implemented. In specific terms, this strategy could aim at :

- Tapping of hydel potential of the region, even as a simple commercial venture for the purpose of production and sale of power to neighbouring States, not to speak of the power intensive industries which can be expected to spring up in the process.
- Investments in the non-hydel energy sector, particularly in the sector of oil and natural gas, for production of energy and emergence of downstream industries.
- Establishment of electronic industries, considering the significantly higher literacy levels in several States. The educated manpower could be given training, particularly in software development.
- Fresh agro-forestry projects being undertaken, without detriment to environment, to develop wood-based industries.

- A massive perennial crops development programme being taken up, particularly in the plantations sector, farming being taken up on industrial scales.
- Investments in spices development — development of farms for production of black pepper, ginger, turmeric, etc. which have high export potential.
- Investments in fruit production and processing and floriculture, including orchid culture.
- Investments in the use of landmass for beef-cattle development.
- Development of traditional crafts, including handlooms.
- Development of tourism and investments for the purpose in wildlife sanctuaries, safari parks, etc.

I realise that giving an inventory of programmes, projects and strategies is easy enough. These have to be matched by resources. Governments alone cannot mobilise the resources. The corporate sector, particularly the private sector, will have to be encouraged to bring in the needed financial resources, the Governments establishing an enabling environment.

Of course, we need to bring about cultural integration of the people of the North-East with those of the rest of India. The electronic Media could play a significant role in this regard. Programmes like the "North-East File" projected on the regional and national networks can give deep insight for the people of our country, including the decision-makers, into the lifestyles of the people of the North-East. We could also take measures which would make the people of the North-East feel a sense of participation at the national level. Because of the ethnic and linguistic affinities, eminent leaders of the North-Eastern region could be given high diplomatic assignments in South-East Asian and Far East Asian regions of the world. Incidentally, you may like to know that the late Shri Hiteshwar Saikia, spoke a language akin to the Thai language. This is the linguistic affinity I have just now referred to.

Finally, no economic or social development will be feasible unless there is peace in the area. Insurgency is, indeed, a problem of the region. In this context, I would only invite attention to the recent report of the Parliamentary Committee on Home Affairs. The Committee have found that this regional problem has now become a national problem — not confined to one State. Their recommendation — political negotiations as distinct from exclusive dependence on "force alone". The Government of India, according to them, have to "create a conducive atmosphere bringing all insurgent groups across

the table" and implementation of the various past accords — MNF Accord, TNV Accord, ATTF Accord, Assam Accord, etc. Does the Director of the India International Centre, who is also a specialist on internal security, agree?

I shall now conclude. In the Hindu *Vastu Sastra*, the North-East is the sector of God. I can assure you, as a North-Easterner, the North-East is, indeed, God's own place. Ironically, it is for all of us the mortals to prevent it from sliding into a hell.

Thank you for your attention.

## NORTH-EAST — A REGION OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE\*

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I am honoured to be amidst you here for this inaugural of the Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The CPA, as all of you may know, has to its credit over eight decades of service in pursuit of the ideals of parliamentary democracy, the Rule of Law and basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Under the umbrella of the CPA, we are a family of 14,000 parliamentarians united without discrimination as between races, religions and cultures. The CPA, amongst its activities, facilitates Regional Conferences to devote special attention to matters of regional interest. I felicitate the CPA on this Conference in the North-Eastern region of our country which is, indeed, an area of special characteristics in terms of its history, geography and people. I also felicitate Mr. Neiba N dang for his initiative in the organisation of this Conference.

I find from the Agenda of the Conference that important subjects are going to be deliberated on — ethnic explosion in the North-East, the Committee System, relationship between the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary and “How to be an Honourable Member in the estimation of the Public”.

The special significance of the North-East in terms of its geographical location and special characteristics of its tribal population has been recognised by the framers of our Constitution. They introduced a Special Chapter in our Constitution to deal with the Scheduled and Tribal Areas. My reference is to Part X as well as the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution. Provisions have been made for special administrative arrangements in terms of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes, Tribal Advisory Councils, autonomous districts and autonomous regions. Consistent with local culture, tradition and practices, a hierarchy of village councils, district councils and regional councils has been designed and provided for. This hierarchy stands vested with powers

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\*At the inauguration of the Regional Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference for the North-Eastern Region of India, Kohima, (27-30 April, 1997) .

and functions for administration of law, exercise of executive authority, raising of resources locally and implementation of developmental programmes. The special constitutional dispensation for the North-East is also based on a pragmatic recognition of diversities amongst the tribals themselves. There are about 200 tribes in the region speaking as many languages. The dynamics of the political aspirations of the people of the North-East has also had its manifestation in the formation of new States in the region over the years.

The North-East as a region has several strengths. These are:

- The total population is about 32 million, about 3.44 per cent of the total population of the country. This is larger than that of some of the individual States, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Orissa and Punjab.
- Natural resource endowments are quite diversified and striking — forests, coal, natural gas, hydel potential, limestone, dolomite, etc.
- The agro-climatic conditions hold out immense potential for a variety of annual and perennial crops, including horticultural and plantation crops.
- Literacy rates in many States are rather high — 82 per cent in Mizoram, 62 per cent in Nagaland and 60 per cent in Tripura as against the national average of 52 per cent.
- Women enjoy a higher social status than in other parts of the country because of matrilineal traditions.
- Women's work participation rate also is higher than the All India average, ranging from 35 per cent to 44 per cent against the All India average of 24 per cent.

One of the significant trends of the day in the North-Eastern region which is debilitating and, therefore, a matter of serious concern is the ethnic rivalries as between the tribes which get reflected in political life. More often, on account of the need for giving representation to a large number of tribes, the size of the Council of Ministers becomes rather large as a matter of course. This is not conducive to smooth and speedy transaction of business. This apart, strong tribal rivalries cause conflicts among decision-makers. Smooth and sound governance is fractured by frictions. The need of the hour is for the tribal interests to be harmonised, tribal rifts and rivalries to be transformed into healthy competition for the betterment of the people. Enhancing literacy where it is low, giving skill and employment orientation to education, reorganizing agriculture through diversification of crops, industrialisation by exploitation of natural resource endowments and gaining political strength through economic advancement are the concerns to which the energies of the people, without being dissipated in local political squabbles, need to be competitively channelized. The legislators have a very crucial role to play in this regard.

Sometime back, I remember, the Chief Ministers of North-Eastern States assembled in Guwahati to witness a presentation made by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on a strategy for the economic uplift of the region. The strategy envisaged geographical and cultural integration of the region internally and with the rest of the country. Infrastructural development was the principal measure suggested. Development of surface transport through a network of inter-State, intra-State and link roads and rail routes; transformation of the Brahmaputra river into a vibrant commercial artery; creation of a network of airports and a grid of aisevices to be provided by a mix of large and small aircraft and helicopters; expansion of border trade with Myanmar; and gaining access to Chittagong port and thereby to the ASEAN market by recourse to diplomatic and commercial dialogues through the Government of India were the specific CII prescriptions. There was general appreciation amongst the Chief Ministers that the CII blueprint was worthy of consideration. The legislators assembled here, while playing their respective roles, would need to have an understanding of these concerns with a regional vision and a national perspective.

I have been urging the decision-makers and people in the rest of the country that they should take proactive interest in getting insight into the lifestyles, problems and concerns of the people of the region, apart from facilitating their political participation at the national level, because that alone will help the process of cultural integration.

Now, the electronic Media is taking increasing interest in projecting the North-East. Programmes like the "North-East File" and "North-East Update" are being telecast. Cultural integration is a two-way process. Hence, the legislators of the region, on their side as well, should proactively get involved in the process, using the weight inherent in, and opportunities held out, by their offices.

The North-East has a 4,500 Kms. long international border with four countries — that is, China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Naturally, the people of the region are exposed to several cross-border impacts which have implications in the region for peace and political, economic and social life, apart from people's behaviour patterns. The legislators of the region would need to help formulate appropriate strategies for the management of the problems arising out of these impacts.

Whatever be the area of our life, the problems that we face could be traced ultimately to the size of our population. In the political front, population size translates into huge constituencies and large size of Legislatures. The larger the size of a Legislature, the less is the time available for business transaction. The Welfare State that we are, people's expectations from the

legislators are high. So, Legislatures have to develop their own institutional mechanisms for meaningful business transaction. The Committee System is one of such vital mechanisms. Committees provide decentralised fora, apart from less formal and cooler environment than the plenary of the Legislatures for consideration of business — the budget, scrutiny of performance of Departments, legislative measures, etc. In the Parliament, we have 35 Committees. Some States like Kerala, Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal already practise the Committee System. Some of the problems faced in practising this System are the tendencies for overlapping jurisdiction and expenses involved. Properly and cost effectively designed Committees could function as powerful legislative and political engine room.

Our Constitution envisages a sound and sophisticated system of Separation of Powers. The three wings of governance, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, are creatures of the Constitution. The relationship among them is one of fine and delicate balance. The Executive is drawn from the Legislature and is clearly accountable to it. The Judiciary has the authority to review the Executive actions of the State and the legislations enacted by the Legislature. People are driven to courts when there is arbitrary or colourable exercise of authority by the Executive or when there are wilful acts of omission on its part. The Judiciary, then, becomes active. Public interest litigation spurred by Executive failure, including in its accountability to the Legislature, adds yet another dimension to judicial activism. Sensitive decisions which are really in the realm of the Executive are sometimes referred by it to the Judiciary. The controversy of judicial activism is not special to our country only. This phenomenon is experienced in other countries as well. In the relationship between the three wings of governance, the issue is not of supremacy of one wing or the other. It is one of each wing playing its due and legitimate role within its own area of competence. But, what is important to be realised is the primacy of the Legislature, the people being supreme and the Legislature being constituted by people's representatives.

Public perception of the legislators is not a matter of make-belief. Significant sections of our people are educated. The illiterate are not uninformed. Our society is politically conscious as reflected by the results of repeated exercise of franchise at the hustings. With the electronic revolution which has overtaken the Media, the common man has the opportunity to monitor the performance of the legislator on an almost daily basis. The issue of conduct of legislators was gone into by the Conference of Presiding Officers of the country in October last. The consensus was that the problem was to be addressed at the electorate level itself. The Conference called upon the political parties to nominate their candidates with discretion and the people themselves to exercise their franchise with caution and return candidates reputed for their aptitude for public service and for their probity.

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I am sure that this Conference conducted in good altitude, in cool environment and amidst the hospitable tribal communities will be marked by elevated levels of introspection, interaction and sharing of experience, leading to a better understanding of this vital region, the dimensions of its political life and the dynamics of democracy. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Conference. I wish it success.

Thank you.

## OUR TRIBALS—A RICH, VARIED AND VITAL HERITAGE\*

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We, the tribes of India, are 68 million strong and constitute 8 per cent of the population. The concentration of tribal population is, of course, in the North-Eastern States. The ratio of tribals to the total population in these States ranges from 22 per cent to 95 per cent. It is about 23 per cent in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh; 15 per cent in Gujarat; 13 per cent in Assam and 10 per cent in Maharashtra. In many States, Scheduled Tribes are thinly spread. Wherever they live in compact areas, the Tribes would do well to aspire and work for autonomous districts and regions. The logical process would be to look for conversion from the Fifth Schedule Status to the Sixth Schedule status, so that the tribes manage their own local governance in tune with their time honoured democratic traditions.

Historically, the tribes have remained an isolated lot. At least in the case of the North-East, the British, as a matter of policy, did not allow exposure of the people of the area to mainstream developments in the country. In other parts of the country, the tribes chose to live in isolated and inaccessible areas, often in and near about forest regions because of their societal practices. The tribes should themselves dismantle the barriers of their isolation, even as they should maintain their basic cultural values and ethnic genius intact.

One of the surest ways of dismantlement of the barriers of isolation is for the tribals to actively participate in the political processes at the national level. They should come to hold vital decision-making positions in the Parliament and the Central Government as well.

As a matter of Government policy, tribal sub-plans are established for development through Plan programmes. The objective is that there is targeted attention to the tribals. More often, those sub-plans remain only

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\*At the All India Tribal Meet, New Delhi, (10 May, 1997).

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on paper. Tribal leaders and legislators should evince special interest in securing effective implementation of the sub-plans. This is needed particularly where tribal population is rather thinly spread.

Many of the basic problems faced by the tribes arise because they get outnumbered by non-tribals as in Sikkim and Tripura. The tribes should be vigilant in ensuring that their population structure is not swamped and swept away by these trends.

Tribals believe in equality of human beings. They don't believe in caste system which is experienced to be the most divisive force in the country today. While this is their strength, the negative phenomenon is the ethnic rivalries as between the tribes. This is not conducive to political stability and, therefore, economic well-being. As I have mentioned recently at Kohima in the Regional Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, tribal interests need to be harmonised; their rifts and rivalries should be transformed into healthy competition for the betterment of the people.

Politics in the country is increasingly becoming multi-polar. Fragmented electorates, hung legislative bodies and fragile Governments are becoming more frequent. Scramble for political alliances in coalition politics is eroding values and undermining probity in public life. In this environment, simple and guileless tribal people should guard against becoming victims of temptations and political exploitation.

Education is the basic means for development. It is, indeed, the means for development of enlightened, healthy, productive and economically sound societies. Investment in education is the same as investment in human capital development. I would even consider that education could be the single point agenda for the development of tribes in our country. While in some of the States of the North-East, literacy amongst tribals is above the national average of 52 per cent, it is very much below the average amongst tribals in the rest of India. The situation ought to be changed.

One of the modalities of targeted development of the tribes is affirmative action, that is providing for reservation in jobs and legislative bodies. Such reservation is totally meaningless unless tribes have education. How can tribes without education get recruited to public service even within reserved quotas? How can tribal legislators discharge their functions unless they have education and understanding?

It has been estimated that employment generation in the Public Sector per annum is only of the order of 600,000 jobs. If 8 per cent of these jobs is reserved for the tribes, it comes to only about 50,000 jobs per annum. Therefore, all the efforts of the tribals to get employment opportunities should not be concentrated only on public service jobs.

With increasing liberalisation, job opportunities also will increasingly get created only in the private sector. In this environment, reservation in public service will tend to be more and more infructuous. Tribals should not waste their time in fighting battles for reservation. They should acquire education and skills which are employable, which will give them access to employment, income and means of livelihood.

The world community has called for "Health for All" by 2000 A.D. But, field studies reveal that there is very high incidence of malnutrition, anaemia, Vitamin A deficiency, gynaecological disorders and sexually transmitted diseases amongst women, apart from malaria and tuberculosis. Medical infrastructure needs to be put on sound footing in tribal areas, particularly in geographically isolated areas like Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Many tribal areas like Jharkhand and Chattisgarh are rich in natural resources, forest and mineral resources in particular. While mineral resources could be tapped without damage to ecology and environment and without detriment to the interests of the tribals, every effort should be made to preserve forest wealth. Tribals should be brought to share the economic gains in the utilisation of the resource endowments of their regions. They should be brought to have a sense of participation and involvement in the process and should not be made to feel economically excluded and exploited. It is almost invariably economic exclusion which causes societal tensions and convulsions of various forms and intensities.

Often when developmental projects are taken up, tribals get displaced; their lands are acquired, but due compensation not paid for long. Rehabilitation of tribals should be built into project activities whenever their displacement is involved.

Tribals are rooted to soil. Land is their primary means of livelihood. In many tribal societies, community ownership of lands is a blessing. Large scale farming on an economically viable scale can be taken up in such lands. Farming with economies of scale is particularly suitable for plantation and perennial crops like tea, rubber, coffee, cashew and coconuts. This cropping pattern will help in protecting soil cover which is the casualty in the generally practised shifting cultivation in the *jhum* system.

In many parts of India, tribals like the Van Gujjars of Western Uttar Pradesh and Himachal have had forests as their abode and have been found to have rich knowledge of the bio-diversity and flora and fauna of their habitation. Tribal leaders should work for constructive association of

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such tribals in the management of forests, far from being alienated from forests as it is often happening. There is a study by the United Nations Development Programme which has revealed that 80 per cent of the world's population is dependent for its medicinal means on indigenous knowledge. Tribals, being traditional gatherers of medicinal plants, roots and herbs from forests, could be deployed on raising medicinal plantations in degraded forest areas. As early as 1960, the Dhebar Commission appointed by the Central Government recognised the symbiotic relationship between tribals and forests. This should continue to inform our forest policy.

I have always held that the culture of excessive dependence on Government subsidies is not good for the tribals in the long run. Subsidies detract from dignified self-reliance. Subsidies are in the nature of crutches. Any society propped up with crutches would collapse like a lame person on being deprived of the same.

My message to this All India Tribal Meet is: our tribal heritage is rich, varied and vital. It is part of the composite culture of India. We should always be informed by this realisation. We should bring home this realisation to the non-tribal people all over the country. The tribals should dismantle their isolationist barriers; effectively participate in national political processes; strengthen their democratic local governance; safeguard their population structure; harness their rivalries only for development; invest in human capital development; get value for their land by its scientific utilisation; and, above all, preserve their beautiful environment.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## TRIBAL THOUGHTS AND TRADITIONS — AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR COMPOSITE CULTURE\*

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I feel honoured that I have been invited to this Sixth Tribal Literary Meet.

Litterateurs have always played a crucial role in the growth of human civilisation. The basic values, thoughts and philosophy of mankind have evolved over the centuries and have been incorporated in literary works and have become a part of human consciousness. Literary works have always acted as catalysts for the continuity of value systems and sprouting of new concepts and social progress. The creativity of writers has consistently found expression in different forms of literature, be they novels, plays, poems, etc. Such works remain the collective heritage of humanity and we need to draw inspiration from them. History has been witness to fundamental changes in socio-economic life triggered by great literary works. Dante's *Divine Comedy* has been considered to have initiated the process of comprehensive societal changes centuries ago in Europe leading to what is called the Renaissance.

The tribal population of our country is 68 million. It is largely concentrated in the North-East and the States of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Our tribes have a very rich tradition of folk tales, lyrics, poems and rites. This offers a very fertile ground for literary work.

The role that could be played by the tribal litterateurs for the benefit of tribals and the people of India in general is phenomenal, because that will carry enormous credibility. They can interpret and convey the various dimensions of tribal identity to others like none else could do. They are better placed than any one else in unravelling the tribal myths which were never written and which flow straight out of nature as the tribals saw it, interpreted it, understood it and applied it to their beliefs and

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\*At the Sixth Tribal Literary Meet organised by the Adivasi Vikas Vibhag Karmachari Sanghtana and the Adivasi Sahitya Parishad, Nasik, (24 May, 1997).

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behavioural patterns and transmitted them down the generations. It should be remembered that the world renowned epic poet who wrote the *Ramayana*, Valmiki was a hunter. Vyasa, the author of our great epic *Mahabharata* was the son of a fisherwoman.

Even for literature by itself, that is, for its own sake, it is necessary that writers base their works on the realm of tribal life. In this context, I am reminded of what Mahasweta Deviji, the famous tribal writer said on receiving the Jnanpith Award. According to her, Indian writers should transcend their obsession with the "loves and escapes of the urban middle class" and travel into unchartered areas of life to write about.

I would take this opportunity to spell out the problems of our tribals today, which according to me should ignite the imagination and literary genius of our writers.

The tribals are often termed as *Adivasis* (aboriginals) and *Vanvasis* (forest dwellers). While these expressions have come into currency particularly in the context of Governments making well-intended efforts to protect them through affirmative action, one cannot fail to perceive in such expressions the underlying derogatory connotation.

Again, references are made to "mainstreaming" the tribals — what I would consider as another derogatory expression arising out of a sense of condescension and of, perhaps, a latent feeling that everything is good with, and superior to, the tribal side stream.

In many parts of our country, and this is well known, tribals as farmers have been doing shifting cultivation, what is generally known as *jhum* cultivation. This practice is reflection of the approach of the tribals to land. They have looked upon land as territory they inhabit and not property that they own. Their concept has been that land vests in the community and that each member of the community only has what in legal parlance is known as "right of user" over the land. This concept flows from a very natural sense of equity and social justice. While this has been a strength for the tribals in this sense, this has also been a weakness leading to their economic decline. Fixed land-holdings which are needed for scientific cultivation, including soil conservation, and getting value for efforts on land, have not been feasible. Consequently, returns from land are not commensurate with efforts thereon.

There are also instances of tribals with ownership and lease-rights over their lands getting the same alienated to non-tribals for totally negligible consideration. In fact, these are cases of virtual expropriation.

Over the last five decades particularly, there have been waves of in-country migration of land hungry non-tribals and this phenomenon, in particular, has significantly contributed to the exposure of the vulnerable tribals to such people with consequent loss of their land and the basic means of their livelihood. In fact, repeated population movements have led to the displacement of tribals resulting in their marginalisation, destruction of their resilience and acceleration of degenerative processes.

Many of our natural resources are to be found in tribal areas. When these resources are exploited, tribals do not necessarily get their share in the fruits of development. They get left behind with a sense of frustration causing their economic exclusion. It is such exclusion which triggers fissiparous tendencies in the country.

Reserve Bank studies show that debt burden is the highest amongst tribals and they are under bondage with unscrupulous money lenders. It is also the case that the lower the asset groups, the more debt burdened and bonded are the tribals. Nor have governmental actions always been sensitive to tribal needs and way of life. For example, under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, forests have become the property of the State. This has often displaced tribals from their habitats. Development projects and hydro-electric and irrigation projects have also resulted in the uprooting of tribals from their moorings subjecting them to economic and culture shocks.

Serious health hazards are virtually decimating tribal population. Tuberculosis, malaria, anaemia, malnutrition and gynaecological disorders are rampant amongst the tribals. This shocking health profile is due to utter lack of access to health infrastructure — doctors, nurses, para-medical staff, health centres and even basic medicines.

The literacy rate amongst the tribals is only about 30 per cent, far below the all-India average of 52 per cent. It is far lesser than even 30 per cent in certain States. It is about 17 per cent in Andhra Pradesh and 19 per cent in Rajasthan. Female literacy amongst tribals is only 18 per cent as against the all India average female literacy of about 39 per cent. Female literacy in Andhra Pradesh is about 9 per cent and in Rajasthan only 4 per cent. We have Ashram schools for tribals. But even as admitted by Government agencies like the NCERT, these schools leave much to be desired. There is need for special researches into the educational needs of the tribals in an area specific manner.

There are tribal States in the North-East where the literacy rate is far higher than the national average. This only shows that basically tribals are

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as intelligent, if not more, as non-tribals. What is needed is only a sustained exposure of tribals to a culture of education.

We do have a regime of protective legislation to help the tribals. But the problem is in their implementation. Laws remain unimplemented or inadequately implemented not merely because of administrative inefficiencies, but because of the passive disposition of the tribals and lack of awareness amongst them.

The tribal literary potential has to expand to its fullest, emerging as a window to the tribal world of these tragic problems. Outstanding contributors among tribal communities need to be identified and encouraged for facilitating a two-way flow and intermingling of tribal and non-tribal thoughts and traditions as that process strengthens what is generally understood as the composite culture of India. It is well to remember, in this context, what our philosopher President, Dr. Radhakrishnan observed once in the Sahitya Academy, and I quote: "No great literature can be produced unless men have the courage to be lonely in their mind, to be free in their thoughts and express whatever occurs to them. Freedom of human spirit is the first essential aspect of every kind of creative literature" (unquote). I am sure that Tribal Literary Meets of this kind would help in the emergence of whole generations of tribal litterateurs who are of intellectual integrity and unparalleled creativity.

One more thought before I conclude. Article 80(3) of the Constitution specially provides for Presidential nomination to the Rajya Sabha, *inter alia*, for distinguished persons from the realm of literature. We would do well to conform to this provision in letter and spirit.

With these words, I have immense pleasure in inaugurating this Sixth Tribal Literary Meet.

My felicitations to the organisers of the Meet. Thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH— NEW DIMENSIONS\*

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I deem it an honour that Shri Jalappa has invited me to attend this Convocation. I have always liked to associate myself with the youth of our country. It is the youth power that would determine the future of our country. As doctors, technocrats, the graduates of today have a special place in our society.

We are a poor nation in which health infrastructure is grossly inadequate. Public expenditure as a ratio of GDP is only 1.3 per cent, as against 7 per cent to 15 per cent in some of the developed countries. Population per doctor is about 2400. Population per nurse is about 3300. Population per Primary Health Centre is about 50,000. Growth in the number of Primary Health Centres is not commensurate with the rate of growth of population. The doctors are largely urban-based. The physical quality of life is poor in the rural areas. Nearly 40 per cent of the people live below poverty line and significant percentage of them are living in rural areas.

Medical professionals should have a clear idea of the demographic picture in our country, because their clientele consists of the people themselves. The total population is 960 million. Females amongst them are over 450 million. Sixty per cent of the population is in the reproductive age group. Crude birth rate is about 30 per thousand; and the crude death rate 9 per thousand. Infant mortality rate is 74 per thousand. Growth rate of population is 2.1 per cent. These figures reflect significant improvement since 1981 on account of the family welfare programme that we have been implementing. Nonetheless, decline in birth rate has not been as rapid as decline in death rate. Fertility rate is 3.5. High birth rate and high infant mortality rate render it necessary for us to give special attention to maternal and child health. The medical professionals, wherever they work — whether under Governments or private sector establishments or as private practitioners — should make it their life's mission to contribute directly or indirectly to containing population. Specifically, they can help in population education enhancing couple protection, bringing down fertility rate and facilitating speedier demographic transition.

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\*At the Convocation of Sri Devaraj Urs Medical College, Kolar, (4 May, 1997).

Approach to medicine has changed over time. In the early stages, diseases were construed as having been caused by supernatural factors. Though as early as about five centuries before Christ, Hippocrates linked diseases to natural causes, by the Middle Ages, superstitions started spreading again. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, what is known as "Machinist Approach" came to prevail, that is, human body being treated as a machine. The present century witnessed a sea-change because of several scientific discoveries — discovery of germs, establishment of antiseptics, use of microscopes, discovery of a whole range of drugs, including penicillin and antibiotics, etc. The experience with epidemics and a plethora of communicable diseases has led to emphasis on environmental sanitation — supply of clean drinking water, provision of drainage, unpolluted environment, etc. Public health has, indeed, developed as a special discipline with an attendant regime of laws. Today's concentration is on social medicine and public health education with special accent on prevention of diseases, disorders and epidemics. It is not the individual who alone is looked upon as the patient, but the society itself. With human life becoming increasingly complex due to impacts of technology and other socio-economic factors, the concept of social medicine is bound to expand in its scope so as to find solutions to problems of mental disorders, crime, delinquencies, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc. Didactic and punitive approaches would increasingly yield place to analysis of these problems and compassionate treatment of these disorders and tendencies.

The graduates, for their professional success, whatever be their specialisation, should have a thorough understanding of the dimensions of social medicine and public health concerns. They should be health educators, side by side with being physicians.

In our country, today, communicable diseases cause the highest morbidity and mortality. Apart from bacterial, viral and parasitic infections, we have the re-emergence of certain infections like Kala Azar. And, we have established National Programmes for vector-borne diseases, tuberculosis, HIV infection, etc.

Changing lifestyles, longevity and dietary habits are causing several non-communicable diseases — diabetes, cerebro and cardiovascular diseases. Our doctors would need to study the underlying clinical and non-clinical causes of these diseases as well on a patient-to-patient basis and give special attention to early detection. Experience shows that most often patients report at advanced stages when therapeutical modalities may meet with only limited success. Here again, the doctors may have to play an educator's role in the community which they serve.

Whatever be the area of treatment, we are experiencing serious shortage of key personnel such as hospital technicians and multi-purpose workers.

This adversely impacts on implementation of National Programmes, performance turning out to be sub-optimal. Particularly in this context, the doctors as a community would need to evolve innovative health management styles. In particular, they could think of:

- Multi-professional education to promote teamwork.
- Skill upgradation of all categories of health personnel.
- Creation of Health Management Information System, based on a systematic study of disease incidence.

There have been vast developments in pharmacology. Pharmaceuticals has become a multi-crore industry. Very potent drugs are being brought out in the market every now and then. Approximately, 100,000 different drugs composed of more than 50,000 different active substances are now available worldwide. Life styles of people are such that patients seek instant remedies for their disorders by bringing emotional pressure on the doctors. The drugs are not always without concomitant risks and side-effects. Medical professionals should train themselves to make assessments of the harms in administering drugs *vis-a-vis* the advantages in administering them. It has been found that at least in forty per cent of the cases, what the patients really requires is sound advice and not necessarily administration of drugs.

Brain drain is significant in the medical profession. It has been estimated that developing countries donate 56 per cent of all migrating physicians. India is one of the principal countries from where doctors migrate significantly. While public policy can, and should, help retain medical professionals within the country, the professionals themselves could come together in consortia, run health facilities and provide services to the people on differential charges. That is, treatment of poor people could be cross-subsided by loading the subsidy elements on the charges for treatment of the well-to-do. Medical facilities so established could also network with industrial establishments which, in turn, can provide health insurance covers for providing medical facilities for the working people, particularly those in the lower income brackets.

Dear Graduates, you have an incredibly vast clientele; you have a great challenge to meet; you have a great cause to serve; your competence and equipment are of world renown. I wish you all very glorious careers and I am confident that your services in your respective areas of competence and specialisation will be a great contribution in the building of our nation into a very healthy and productive people.

Thank you for your kind attention.

## MANAGEMENT—INSTRUMENT FOR ORDERLY AND EFFECTIVE CONDUCT\*

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I am happy to be amidst you today in this Institute.

Management is central to all human activities. It is perceptible in how an individual organises himself, in the running of households, in the administration of business, in the running of Government and in political organisations. In the Parliament, we speak of “floor management”. The science of management is nothing but drawing lessons from the behaviour of people at the individual and organisational levels, theorising them and codifying them. In brief, management is the instrument for orderly and effective conduct.

I have seen copra merchants of Cochin and jewellery traders of Jaipur who have not had much of formal education, but who do business worth lakhs of rupees with just a table and a telephone. They must be intrinsically excellent managers of their business. That is why we come across books with titles like “What they don’t teach in Harvard”, etc.

Scientific management would call for setting out clear goals or objectives, establishment of strategies for their achievement and stipulation of a timeframe. As management specialists, you would have heard of *Management by Objectives*. Sometimes, *Management by Default* is also effective. By design, thorny issues are allowed to remain dormant so that by efflux of time itself, solutions emerge under the force of circumstances. Former Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao was often fond of saying, in response to what he considered as unfair criticisms, that on certain occasions and in regard to certain issues, “not to take a decision could itself be a decision”.

Leadership is a quality which is very essential in management. How does a good manager become a good leader? It is by setting personal example, in terms of knowledge of subject, dedication, integrity, etc; by motivating employees; by providing them job satisfaction; and by involving them in setting and achieving goals.

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\*At the Convocation of the International Management Institute, New Delhi, (7 May, 1997).

I am sure, all of you would be familiar with Peter Drucker's definition of a leader. I quote:

An effective leader is one who can make ordinary men do extraordinary things, make common people do uncommon things. Leadership is the lifting of a man's lights to a higher vision, the raising of man's standard to a higher performance, the building of a man's personality beyond his normal limitations.

Any organisation to be managed effectively should be lean. As part of economic reforms and structural adjustments, we speak of "downsizing" Government Departments and corporate bodies. It becomes necessary because of the existence of more manpower than the carrying capacity of the organisation. Downsizing is always harsh on the employees. It is best prevented. How do we prevent it? By exercising caution at the time of initial recruitment. Job content of each activity has to be assessed through work studies and optimum manpower deployment done.

Any enlightened management of an organisation would need to be based on the realisation that the human being is central to its activities. A Personnel and Human Resource Development Department is crucial. Investment in the human being, the employees, is as vital as investment in machinery and civil works. An effective grievance redressal system is required. Individual grievances should not be allowed to snowball into collective disputes and demoralisation which are likely to disrupt industrial relations.

In a liberalising environment, modernisation and fresh technology induction will take place as a continuous process. The skills of the employees will get outdated. They have to be re-trained with new skills to cope with changing production processes and operations. Multi-skilling and life long training should become a part and parcel of the policy of human resource development.

Whether in Government or corporate bodies, one of the failings of the management is centralisation. Power is always intoxicating. The normal human tendency is always to have concentration of power and authority and not to share the same. Centralisation will kill initiatives down the line. The centralised organisation is something in the nature of a Polio affected human body. It would be effective only in parts. A good management is a decentralised management. Administrative, financial and decision-making powers should be clearly delegated with responsibilities being fixed at identified levels. Such a decentralised mechanism cannot work unless it is based on trust. *Bona fide* decisions, even if wrong, will have to be supported. It is also normal human tendency for authorities delegated with powers not exercising them and

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pushing decision-making to higher echelons. This tendency stems from diffidence in taking responsibility. It also stems from authorities delegating powers, interfering with decision-making at delegated levels. There should be a two-way determination on the part of functionaries with delegated powers to exercise them with confidence and on the part of delegating functionaries not to interfere with lower levels of decision-making.

Many of you have heard of the 80:20 principle. The theory goes that in any human organisation, 20 per cent of the people do 80 per cent of the work. It is indeed true that each functionary reaches his level of incompetence at varying paces. Thus, we have the achievers and the idlers. A sound management system should identify the achievers and provide them with incentives for growth. This would call for a sound and objective system of merit-rating. Even if retribution for the idler may not be feasible in the given circumstances — such circumstances are common in governmental systems — achievers should not go unrewarded. If achievers are not rewarded in an environment of competitiveness in the industrial and commercial world, they will get pirated.

Many economic forces could be attempted to be tamed and controlled by application of known economic formulae like fiscal policy, monetary policy, etc. But there is one commodity in respect of which human ingenuity is yet to invent the means of control. This commodity is 'time'. There should be good time management. Managers often waste their time by delaying decisions. They miss the wood for the trees. There is normally a secular trend in cost escalations over a period of time. Delayed decisions, therefore, more often are costly. That is why whenever a contract is signed, there is always a general provision to the effect that time is the essence of contract.

We are notorious for our low levels of productivity. Our rate of growth of productivity in terms of GDP per person per annum is around 2.9 per cent as against 5 per cent to 6 per cent in countries like Thailand, Singapore and Taipei-China and as against 8.6 per cent in the Republic of Korea. While this situation could be an index of the level of our modernisation, it is also significantly accounted for by our work culture. To face the challenge of competition in the liberalising and globalising world, managements should be given high productivity orientation. Wage management will have to be productivity-linked. We can ill-afford wage regimes based on mechanical indexation formulae, *i.e.* mechanically linking wages with cost of living indices. Wealth should be produced to be shared. Attempting to share the existing levels of wealth without additions on the margin can only lead to impoverishment and sharing of poverty.

The forthcoming millennium would belong to societies which master information technology. Business and professions will be increasingly information driven. The logic is simple. Information is knowledge and knowledge is power. Efficient managements will have to give very high priority for establishment of Management Information Systems, not merely to be informed about matters internal to enterprises, but external to them. Cross-border movements of capital, transnational location of enterprises and multinationalisation of industries, dynamism in technology flows, etc. are all factors which are to be mastered through highly sensitive information systems even for survival, leave alone competition. In this scenario, technocrats in management may have to become generalists as well, keeping themselves informed all the while about the overall local, national and international economic developments and generalists amongst managers may have to specialise themselves in specific areas of business and professions. I shall put it that technocrats should be generalists too, while generalists should become specialists as well.

I have attempted to share with you my perception of the dimensions of Management as I have gathered over the years by being a Generalist Manager in Government and Governmental Enterprises. Management is a vast subject to which I can't do justice even with my limited experience due to the time constraints of the occasion. So, I shall stop here.

I wish a glorious future for all the managers who are assembled here. I wish the International Management Institute 'God speed' in its efforts to build enlightened cadres of managers which are indispensable for nation-building.

Thank you for your attention.

## NEEDED—A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT\*

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Thank you for inviting me to inaugurate this unique event — this new Fair on Social Development. Several countries have achieved economic growth. So have we. But economic growth has not translated into distributive justice. Excessive dependence on technology has disrupted employment. And, for some years now, we have been urging for development with a human face. Globally, the centrality of the human being in the developmental processes has come to be recognized as an article of faith.

It is in this background that this Social Development Fair organized by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) becomes unique. Almost every dimension of human development is being projected in this Fair — population control, literacy and education, health and sanitation, rural and urban development, women's and children's issues, etc. I congratulate the ITPO.

The root cause of most of our problems is to be traced to the size of our population. Our work-force has been increasing at a faster rate than our population. Rate of employment has been growing at a lesser rate than that of work-force.

We do have significant achievements to our credit in handling our population problem. We have brought down fertility ratio to 2.6; brought down infant mortality; raised the age of expectation of life at birth to almost double the years it was at the commencement of this century. We now have the task of filling our people's average life span of 60 years with quality, food and nutrition, security opportunities for education and skill development and full, freely chosen and productive employment.

While the rest of the world counts their few illiterates, we are counting our literates! This cannot be and should not be. We cannot for ever be the most populous poor country with a low human development index. If we

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\*At the inauguration of the Social Development Fair, organised by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), New Delhi, (12 April, 1997).

can supply doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers and technicians to the rest of the world, I do not see any reason why we should remain ourselves on the lowest rungs of development.

We are alarmed at the new data on poverty that has emerged. More than a third of our population is still living below the poverty line. The solution to the problem of poverty is community development.

We have had a long experience in community development. Even during British days we, as a society, laid emphasis on what used to be known in those days as local development programmes. After we became independent, the community development blocks as sub-district developmental formations came to be established. Thereafter, we adopted the concept of National Extension Service. Through the medium of the blocks, we started providing extension services to the people in various sectors of development — agriculture, industries, cooperation etc. Then we evolved Area Development Programmes to be followed by Small Farmers' Development Programmes, Integrated Rural Development Programmes, etc. Now, the Governments at the Central and State levels and the civil society are in partnership in bringing about rural and urban development.

As many of you would know, Mao Zedong said that women hold half the sky. What he meant was that women of the world, in terms of numbers, constitute half of the humanity and are as important as men. It is universally recognised today that for establishing an equitable international social order, women should be empowered. Whether it be education, employment, ownership of property, housing, health, sanitation or environment, there are special women's dimensions. It is for tackling problems relating to women's dimensions that we need women's empowerment. Recently, in the month of February last, we organised a Special Inter-Parliamentary Conference on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics". It was noted during this Conference that all over the world the problem faced in bringing about women's empowerment is ultimately one of changing societal attitudes. It was noticed too that cutting across political systems and economic models, women continued to be a discriminated lot in the matter of holding decision-making positions. It was concluded that sustained efforts would have to be made in securing partnership between men and women in politics.

Yesterday, I read in the newspapers that according to a Human Development Report, South Asia is a 'Hall of Shame', considering the level of discrimination against its women. Being one of the most populous parts of the world, we need to make conscious efforts to end discrimination against women.

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Exploitation of children is a tragic reality. Child exploitation has myriads of forms. It exists in all societies — developed and developing. In whatever form it may exist, this exploitation has to be terminated. Where poverty levels are high, the problem of child exploitation is intense. Though there are economic dimensions to the problem of child exploitation, I am confident that this can be ended by sincere political commitment. Parties in our country being agreed in principle about ending child exploitation, now the question is one of implementation of programmes established and of enforcing special laws enacted for the purpose.

I am aware that international organisations which are represented in this Fair — the UNFPA, the UNDP and the ILO have been playing in the country a spearheading role in their own areas of competence in projecting human concerns and in creating awareness about them in silent efficiency. It is very thoughtful of ITPO to have organised this Fair in partnership with these organisations as well.

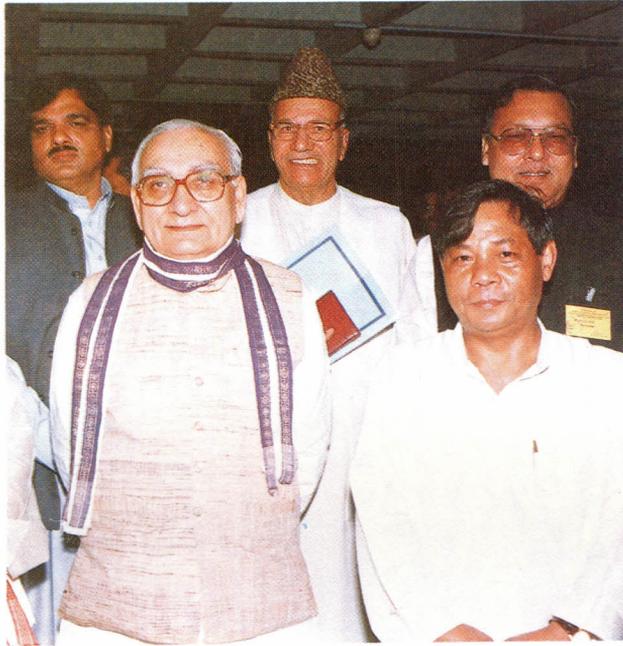
I am sure that the variety of exhibits in the Fair would be a window on the mass of knowledge we have built up on our social and human concerns. The Seminars being organised as part of the Fair are a sure way to open this window of knowledge. The Fair and the Seminars are significant efforts considering that our weak areas are information dissemination and extension and transfer of knowledge and services.

The India Trade Promotion Organisation has become what it is by merger of the Trade Fair Authority of India and the Trade Development Authority. In the result, the Organisation combines in itself capabilities to promote production of goods and project them for purposes of trade and commerce. Now, as evidenced by this Fair, the Organisation is extending its role from attention to exclusive concerns of industries, commerce and economy to those of human development. I have no doubt that the ITPO will become a movement which will project all the multifarious concerns of our people, making significant contribution to our country becoming a mighty economic power and a societal model of equity and social justice. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Fair. I wish the Fair a resounding success.

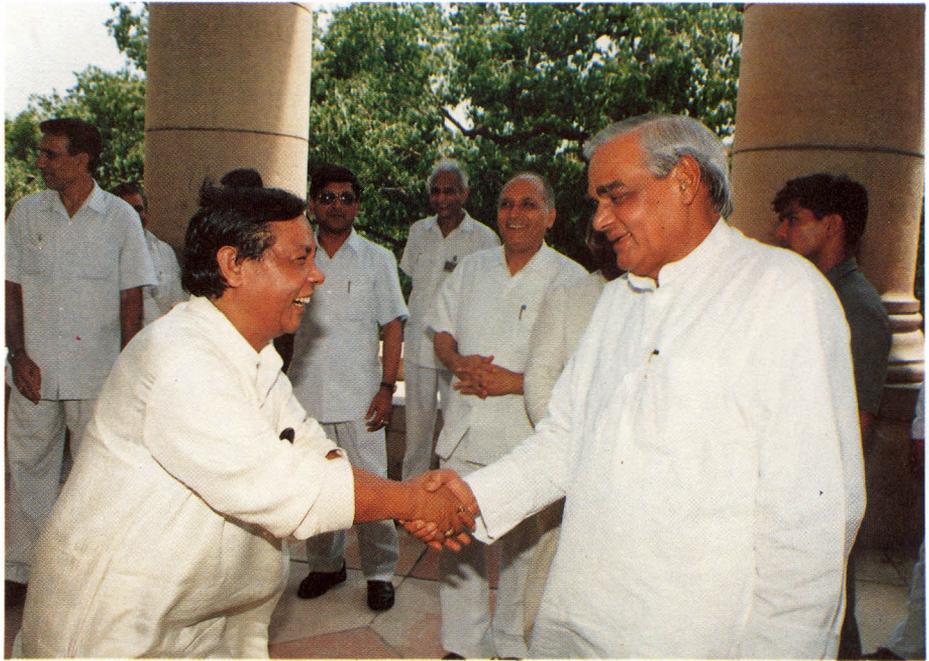
Thank you.



With the President, Shri K.R. Narayanan



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



With the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee



With the former President, Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma



With the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee



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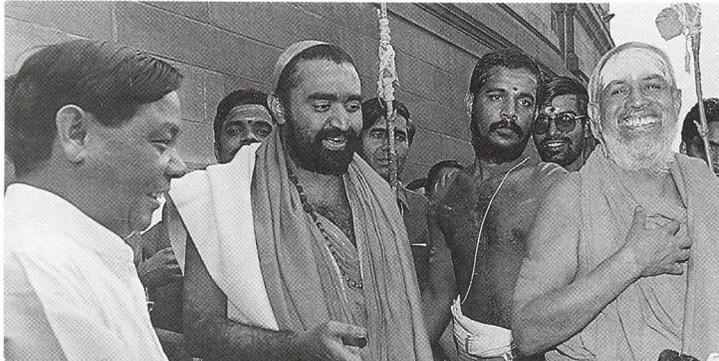
With the former Prime Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao



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



With the former Prime Minister, Shri I.K. Gujral



With the Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham,  
His Holiness Jagadguru Jayendra Saraswati and His  
Holiness Jagadguru Shankara Vijayendra Saraswati



With the Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla and the Deputy Speaker, Eleventh Lok Sabha, Shri Suraj Bhan



With the Congress (I) President, Smt. Sonia Gandhi

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# III

## ECONOMIC WELFARE

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## GLOBAL TRADE—CHANGING REALITIES\*

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I am pleased to be in this National Colloquium on World Trade Organisation organised by the Shriram College of Commerce, University of Delhi.

International trade has become a potent force in the process of globalisation. The Uruguay Round is over. The Final Act is in place. The WTO is in. India is part of it.

A five-day Ministerial Conference of the WTO is scheduled to begin on 9th December, 1996 in Singapore. At the pre-Ministerial stage, various groups of countries have already sought to get their acts together.

In Singapore itself, late in April 1996, there has been a World Trade Congress. Several Trade Ministers and leading businessmen of the world participated in the Congress. Trade Related Issues was one of the subjects proposed in the Congress for inclusion in the Agenda of the Ministerial Conference.

A quadrangular group of the USA, Canada, the European Union and Japan has also had its strategic meeting. It rehearsed a common approach for the Conference.

The Sixth Summit of G-15 has met early this month and echoed its apprehensions.

The international trade scenario today is: the developed nations have wealth, investible resources and technology; they have saturated their own markets; they are on a scramble for markets; many developing nations have resources but have not necessarily generated wealth, not to speak of investible resources, nor do they have technologies of their own; but what they do have is markets. The developed nations want to access these markets on their terms. Having, through several trade liberalisation rounds, successfully

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\*At the inauguration of the National Colloquium on "World Trade Organisation: Implications for Developing Economies", New Delhi, (23 November, 1996).

negotiated dismantling of trade barriers (which of course is meant to be mutually beneficial to all the countries concerned), the developing nations have been tenaciously pushing an agenda on Trade Related Issues — services, investments, intellectual property, labour, environment, etc.

Trade issues, by themselves, are clear-cut. Trade related issues are not. The linking of trade related issues to international commerce, apart from presenting serious practical problems in business interactions, has serious implications for broader social and economic policies of the weaker nations.

Let us take, for example, the OECD proposal for a Multilateral Investment Agreement (MIA). In simple terms, MIA seeks to establish the rights of foreigners to invest in any country and limit the host country's interference with these rights. A foreign investor may go to a country with large domestic market for consumer goods and seek investment in the production of such goods. This may not necessarily generate wealth and result in sustainable development. This may also decimate already domestically established small and medium consumer goods industries. The MIA may also pre-empt the imposition of export obligations on the foreign investor. The foreign investor may also have to be given "national treatment" in regard to his capital, in terms of access to credit, subsidies, etc.

Capital brought in by foreign investor under MIA regime need not also necessarily bring in free flow of technology. Investment may be in the form of capital goods, equipment and setting up of production. But patenting of technology, combined with trademark and designer rights and trade secrets of undisclosed processes, may seriously inhibit technology transfer in the real sense of the term.

In the area of Intellectual Property Rights, the controversy of 'product patents' versus 'process patents' is too well known for me to dwell on. Developed countries want IPR protection as well for the process of producing goods. We, in the India, have had difficulties in accepting this. Only recently the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research in its Annual Meeting cautioned that a global attempt is being made to prevent the rights of farmers of developing countries to grow better crops in the name of IPRs and patents. In December last year, the Government of India promulgated an Ordinance to amend the Patents Act. A Bill to replace the Ordinance has also been passed by the Lok Sabha. Now it is under the Select Committee process. Reportedly, however, a WTO Committee may be looking, in this context, into non-fulfilment of WTO-related IPR provisions. Patentability of inventions, scope of patent rights, safeguards against abuse of rights, compulsory licensing, etc. are far too complicated issues which need to be brought under microscope.

For nearly two years now, there has been a raging controversy all over the world in the matter of linkage of labour standards with international trade. 'Social Clause' is not yet defined anywhere. The concept is that it is an international trade arrangement which renders it feasible to link imports with conformity to labour standards. Under this arrangement provision could be made for restriction or prohibition of imports of products from countries, industries or enterprises where there is no compliance with internationally stipulated labour standards. It could also provide for preferential imports of products from where there is compliance with these standards. We, in India, are for promotion of labour standards for their own sake. In fact, we have ratified more ILO Conventions than United States has done and also enacted laws based on these Conventions. It demonstrates our political will, our will to stand international scrutiny. But, as a developing country, we have problems of implementation. Conformity to standards cannot be forced through the leverage of trade. In our country all the trade unions are unified in this thinking.

Reportedly, the Director-General, WTO has proposed a 4-point formula on the issue of uniform labour standards. The formula is: avoidance of workplace abuse; non-invocation of trade sanctions; non-deprivation of competitive advantage of developing countries; and ILO to be the agency to handle the issues. ILO has always been handling labour issues by liberally negotiating labour standards. If trade sanctions are not to be invoked and competitive advantage of developing countries is also to be protected, it is unclear how the so called 4-point formula can even be remotely connected to the terms of reference of WTO itself.

Linking environment with trade is as slippery as linking labour standards with trade. To give a very simple example, it could be argued that a particular agricultural product in the production of which pesticides are used cannot be allowed for export. There could be hair-splitting and interminable arguments and counter-arguments on the kind of pesticides used, the kind of formulation of the pesticides themselves, the extent of their residues in the agricultural product, etc. There are, of course, scores of other issues involved in environment, trade linkage.

I am happy that all these issues I have referred to have been listed for discussion in this Colloquium. I am sure that the various experts who are scheduled to participate in this Colloquium will facilitate sharper focus on the issues involved.

There are also reports that many of these trade related issues may not ultimately come to be on the Agenda of the Singapore Ministerial Conference

but the direction in which the wind is blowing is clear. Ever increasing areas are being tenaciously brought under the umbrella of trade on the very simple argument that multilateralism under WTO is safer for the member countries than bilateral battles between countries. Therefore, even if the Singapore Ministerial does not discuss the trade related issues, debate and gentle coercion will go on. We should be vigilant.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Colloquium.

Thank you for your attention.

## SAARC—NEED FOR NEW GOALS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT\*

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I am pleased to be amidst you, captains of industry and commerce in the SAARC countries.

SAARC will complete 12 years by the end of next month. The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry has completed three years and is going on its fourth. Though the Chamber came much later, it has packed a lot of activities within a short period, particularly since the signing of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) in terms of awareness generation and knowledge building activities, research on free trade arrangement, outward business delegations, tourism development, information exchange, development of interface between industry and Governments, etc. I compliment the SAARC Chamber for its sustained and steady performance.

The traditional concept of international trade is based on the theory of comparative advantages, that is, each country produces goods which it considers most advantageous to produce and exchanges the same with goods produced on similar basis in other countries. Over the years, national economies have developed unequally. The most crucial comparative advantages of developed countries have been their technology and capital. But they need markets. There are limits to their own domestic markets. They are on a scramble for fresh markets. In the process, comparative advantage in trade is being sought by several countries transnationally. It is being sought collectively by several countries in specific regions. Countries within regions look for complementarities so that they can collectively maximise their comparative advantages, minimise their disadvantages and trade between themselves and outside their regions to their mutual benefit. The result has been development of processes which have come to be known as regional integration, growth triangles, etc.

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\*At the inaugural of the Fourth Annual General Meeting of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi, (13 November, 1997).

It is in the background of this sea-change in the practice of international trade that the SAARC region has to see its own solidarity and set out its goals of future economic development. Perception of this background is, indeed, reflected in the objectives of the SAARC itself which, *inter alia*, call for active collaboration and mutual assistance in economic, technical and scientific fields, etc., apart from promotion and strengthening of collective self-reliance amongst the countries of South Asia.

For far too long, we in South Asia have been living in our own political cocoons. SAARC is an effort at breaking over from these cocoons. Naturally, we are halting and hesitant in our efforts at coming together. These efforts need to be strengthened at the non-official, non-governmental levels. It is here that the role of the SAARC Chamber becomes vital. Political and inter-governmental decisions at regional cooperation can be given meaningful articulation on ground only by those involved in industries, investments and trade which are represented in the SAARC Chamber. It is also a fact of life everywhere in the world that industry and trade are a pressure group by themselves and they do impact on governmental policies. In our region as well, industry and trade need to inform Governments and impact on their policies, the ultimate objective being the prosperity of our peoples.

Due to historical and cultural reasons, we in our region have always looked to the West. This has conditioned the directions of our trade in a manner not necessarily advantageous to us. We have to look intra-regionally to begin with. We constitute 20 per cent of world population. Our contribution to world income is only 1.3 per cent. Where does our region stand in world trade scenario? The picture is:

- Share of intra-regional trade in SAARC world trade : 3.51 per cent
- Share of intra-regional exports in SAARC world exports : 3.73 per cent
- Share of intra-regional imports to SAARC world imports: 3.33 per cent

In absolute terms, out of the SAARC world trade of 83 billion U.S. dollars, SAARC trade with the regions outside South Asia accounts for 80 billion US dollars. This is really incredible. There is a crying need for correcting the directions of our trade to focus within our region. This is particularly important for the reason that the West does have a 'look East' policy and the East has a 'Look West' policy, the simple reason being that the 20 per cent of the world population we are, we constitute a huge existing as well as potential market. Why should we not realise this and look at ourselves in terms of our collective comparative advantages, shedding our traditional reservations and divesting trade and industry of

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politics for the moment? This is the message that you captains of industry have to carry home to your Governments.

It is everybody's knowledge that often intra-regional trade amongst us is not through the legal channel. It goes through illegal channels as well as third country routes. Why should our restrictive practices drive people to illegal channels of trade, to third country routes making imports ultimately costlier for the common man?

If we are to enhance our trade, we have to produce tradeable goods. To enhance production, we have to mutually open up for movement of capital for investment, for sharing of technology and skills and for complementing our services. Detailed demand-supply studies of goods, products and services have to be conducted at the micro level, *i.e.* at the enterprise level.

We have to cooperate in sharing of trade information. We in India have established a National Trade Information Service. A specialised SAARC Trade Information Network has to be created at the industry level, at the SAARC Chamber level, if this has not already been done.

The developed countries are attempting to access our countries and regions through formation of supra level trading blocs. It is desirable that SAARC takes coordinate positions in regard to interface or membership of our countries in these blocs, duly informed of ground truths through trade and industry.

Last month, SAARC Speakers and parliamentarians met in Islamabad and discussed people-to-people cooperation. One of the significant recommendations of the Conference unanimously made has been freer movement of people within our region. Our regional cooperation can succeed and the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) can transform into South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) only if mutual credibility and trust is created people-to-people. I would even consider that the sheet anchor of SAARC is one of its own stated objectives, *viz.* 'to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems.'

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Fourth Annual General Meeting of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I wish the meeting all success.

Thank you.

## NATIONAL ECONOMIES—IMPERATIVE OF SOUND MANAGEMENT OF FUNDAMENTALS\*

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It is exactly one year back, to be precise, on the 11th of January, 1997, that I had the privilege of addressing the valedictory of CII's Third Partnership Summit in Calcutta. It looks like I have become CII's professional valedictory speaker. The theme of the valedictory plenary of the Third Summit was "A Vision of the Future". Mr. John Major, the then British Prime Minister, had also presented his vision of the future of India — as an Asian regional power, as a world economic power, as a nation of entrepreneurs, as a trading giant, as a country with people of academic excellence, as an achiever of prosperity through competition, as a protector of environment and above all as a strong secular democracy.

No doubt, since the Calcutta Summit, we have proved John Major prophetic so far as "democracy" part of his vision of India is concerned. We changed two Prime Ministers, got the Eleventh Lok Sabha dissolved and are heading towards the Twelfth Lok Sabha.

CII President, Mr. N. Kumar, in his reported address at the Media has been more specific and precise than John Major and has said that India may become the world's fourth largest economic power by 2020. Even while visualising India as an Asian and a world economic power in the years to come, today's plight of the 'Asian Tigers' does give us a creepy feeling. The 'Asian Miracle' suddenly looks like the 'Asian Mirage'. The normal reflex of economic pundits and political decision-makers is to worry about the economy when it is not doing well. The current Asian crisis would seem to teach us the lesson that all of us should worry also when the economy is doing too well.

Volumes have been written on the Asian economic crisis. Several factors have been identified as having caused the crisis — currency speculation, unwise investments, conspicuous consumption, corrupt practices, inefficient and arbitrary governance, high levels of short term external debt, undesirable banking practices, etc.

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\*At the Special Plenary Session of the Fourth Partnership Summit, 1998 organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Chennai, (10 January, 1998).

One should naturally ask the question why the Asian economic crisis has not caught up on the Indian economy as well, except to the extent of some reduction in the rupee value. The answers are not far to seek and these are:

- the democratic dissent that makes the policy makers of India think and be cautious; while there has been a large body of consensus about the inevitability of reform, on grounds of ideology as well as prudence, measures of liberalisation were constantly under public scrutiny;
- the natural Indian tendency to be cautious while treading new ground; this tendency impacted on the pace of reform; India did come under international criticism for what was seen as slow pace of reform and what was even suspected as disinclination for liberalisation; India is neither a carnivore nor a herbivore, a tiger or an elephant; it is a nation of nearly a billion human beings for the management of whose economy, political decision-makers have to necessarily tread the path of caution; and this is what they did; the precautions they took included—
  - keeping the current account deficit at about 1.5 per cent of the GDP;
  - maintaining limits to external debts, particularly, the short term variety;
  - maintaining limits to the role of foreign institutional investors;
  - a plan of phasing for reaching total rupee convertibility;
  - guiding investments on prioritised basis into the infrastructure sector.

It is normal human nature to switch to extremes. The need of the hour is to avoid extremes. Based on the Asian experience, there is no need for retracing our reformist policies, as that would be switching over to another extreme. The Asian experience does not mean that economic reforms and liberalisation are not appropriate. The lesson of this experience is only that management is important for its own sake, globalization or no globalization. If the fundamentals of the economy are managed properly, everything else ought to fall in place. What are these fundamentals?

- Capital and human resources should be productively and gainfully deployed.
- Tax structure, rates and implementation should leave enough internal resources with the industry for facilitating further investments and employment creation; running business, by itself, should be an incentive for expansion of business.

- Resources raised through debts, whether it be internal or external, should be within the carrying capacity of the economy.
- We should try to live within our means; we can't afford to spend more than we can earn. Expenditure cannot outstrip resources beyond limits.
- In economic parlance, we should have manageable limits to deficits — fiscal as well as current account.
- Non-wealth generating subsidies may have to be carefully and cautiously phased out.
- There should be technology induction for modernising industries and making them competitive; and concurrently there should be skill development for absorption of technologies.

Indeed, we in India have attempted to address all these matters. We may not have achieved full success in every respect; but we have had significant results to our credit. Fiscal deficit is expected to be contained at around 4.5 per cent of GDP; the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme (VDIS) has helped in raising a tax revenue of over Rs. 10,000 crore, on a disclosed income of Rs. 33,000 crore; by the close of the year 1997, inflation was 4.8 per cent; Reserves were US\$ 27 billion; cumulative Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was US\$ 9.2 billion; and net inflow of Foreign Institutional Investment (FII) was yet another amount of US\$ 9 billion.

On the negative side, we are yet to improve our Public Sector; the collective performance of Central Public Sector Enterprises with an outlay equivalent of over US\$ 40 billion yields only six per cent pre-tax profit to capital employed; about 270,000 industrial enterprises are sick and bank credit equivalent to US\$ 3.5 billion are outstanding against them; outgo on subsidies is equivalent of about US\$ 4 billion; and right now export growth is sluggish. The trade gap at the end of 1997 was US\$ 3.4 billion, as against about US\$ 510 million in April, 1997; apart from the fall in the value of the rupee, certain problems hurting exports are chronic like poor export infrastructure. All these problem areas have to be addressed with a sense of realism and political consensus. Of course, overnight or even short run solutions may not be feasible; but there is no escape from efforts at phased establishment of solutions.

Going back to the theme of the current Asian economic crisis, now the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has come forward with what has come to be known as a "bail out fund" of over US\$ 100 billion to help out the Asian countries affected by the crisis. This Fund, obviously, is as much for bailing out the economies of the crisis ridden host countries as the foreign

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business interests, including banking institutions in those countries. It is also patent that the offer of resources from this Fund will not be without conditionalities. Such conditionalities may not be easy of social and political acceptance. Indeed, in this context, already ideologues have started projecting the theme of neo-imperialism through the economic route. Particularly in this background, more important than *ex post facto* access to bail out funds, is pre-emption of the need for such access. For such pre-emption, there is no escape from sound management of the fundamentals about which I have already made some extensive reference. It is also needless for me to say that in the inevitable globalisation of national economies, some ground rules for regulation of cross-border movement of capital would need to be internationally established. In a sense, assistance from bail out funds is as much in the nature of condonation of the misdeeds of unscrupulous players in the bourses as of economic mismanagement. Regulation of international capital as it flows is better than *ex post facto* condonation of such misdeeds and mismanagement.

I am sure that the captains of industry and business, political and economic decision-makers and industrial and business economists present in this Summit would have analysed all the problems faced by them and would have arrived at findings and thought of solutions for facilitating orderly growth of industrial and business opportunities to the mutual benefit of all the players.

Thank you one and all for your kind attention and for this honour of getting to address you at this Special Plenary Session. Wish you Happy New Year.

## GROWTH WITH STABILITY\*

Today is another day of confidence; of confidence in our ability to managing transitions in our democratic polity; in transferring power from one set of decision-makers to another; and even of retaining power in virtually the same set of decision-makers within a framework of reassurances as between them. This, by itself, should breathe confidence amongst industrialists who are seemingly diffident by asking the question, "Can India raise its growth rate to 8 per cent GDP?"

I am an optimist. My optimism is not wishful thinking. It is based on our solid experience. In the sixties, we achieved Green Revolution; we transformed ourselves from gatherers of food into producers of food; we are self-sufficient now, and in fact, we export foodgrains and products. In the seventies, we achieved White Revolution; the Operation Flood Programmes have brought about a sea-change in production of milk and milk products. In the eighties, we achieved Edible Oil Revolution; from being chronic major importers of edible oil, we have become marginal importers of the same. The composition of the mix of our export products has significantly enhanced the ratio of manufactured products *vis-a-vis* primary goods.

Our total GDP, at factor cost, is about Rs. 300,000 crore; nearly 70 per cent of it is accounted by agriculture, manufacturing and trade — agriculture, 25 per cent; manufacturing, 23 per cent; and trade, 21 per cent. Our Eighth Plan average of sectoral growth has been:

- Industry — 8.1 per cent
- Services — 7.3 per cent
- Agriculture — 3.6 per cent

During 1995-96, the growth rate in industrial sector was 11 per cent and in the services sector 7.5 per cent. The Eighth Plan period synchronised with the period of economic reforms. In individual years since 1992-93, our GDP growth rate has ranged between 5.3 per cent and 7.2 per cent. This is the trend of buoyancy. This trend should be compared with the earlier sluggish growth rates of about 3.5 per cent which in the jargon of our planners and economists used to be known as Hindu (conservative) growth rates.

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\*At the CII National Conference and Annual Session, New Delhi, (22 April, 1997).

Yet another question of the CII is, "What are the imperatives for 8 per cent growth?" Answer to this question calls for introspection.

In the industrial sector, over 80 per cent of the contribution to growth comes from the manufacturing sector. Within the manufacturing sector, the broad groups of manufacturing which have registered good growth rates, particularly over the last two years, are: metal products, machinery and machine tools, electrical machinery, transport equipment and parts, chemical and chemical products, apart from food products. These items account for a weight of only about 40 per cent in the manufacturing sector. Our weak areas are: cotton textiles and jute industries. They do hold back our growth rates. These are industries in which incidence of sickness is rather high. They need special attention. What is reassuring is the buoyancy in the machinery sector. This is symptomatic of dynamism in other manufacturing areas.

A number of industrial production groups which account for comparatively low weights in the manufacturing sector like wood and wood products, paper and paper products, leather products, rubber-based goods, non-metallic mineral products, etc. are doing reasonably well. However, a detailed disaggregated product group-wise analysis, and growth strategies based on that, will have to be established.

In the short and medium terms, the boost for expansion of growth has to necessarily come from the manufacturing sector, growth in the agriculture sector which is the other major sector being beset with problems of infrastructure, vagaries of monsoons, etc.

We have an investment of Rs. 150,000 crore in about 250 Public Sector corporations, the net return from which is less than 1 per cent. About 60 public sector corporations are chronically sick. Despite long drawn out efforts at rehabilitation of the sick corporations, viable solutions have evaded us. We have to grapple with this problem in a time-bound manner because what is involved is resource deployment which does not lead to sustainable wealth generation.

Nor has sickness in industrial enterprises been the monopoly of the Public Sector. At peak levels, the BIFR was handling the cases of about 1,500 sick industrial units, largely in the private sector. The problem has been lack of fast track procedures for conclusive settlement of these cases.

One of the basic problems of public sector management has been, as pointed out by a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, their treatment as 'State' under Article 12 of the Constitution. The devil is in the detail of share holding. If there is dominant Government share holding in an enterprise, Article 12 would be attracted with attendant judicial review of even

commercial decisions. No manager can run an enterprise where there is scope for discretionary decisions being questioned as arbitrary. What has been suggested in this context is that the Judiciary itself be requested to set out guidelines to "moderate the complexities arising from Article 12".

Manufacturing is significantly dependent upon steady power supply. The perennial problems of the power sector have been:

- Low plant load factor of thermal plants which account for 75 per cent of our power generation capacity.
- Heavy transmission and distribution losses ranging upto 25 per cent; additions to generation capacity being a matter of long gestation and high costs, special attention needs to be given to cutting down transmission and distribution losses and improving the plant load factor.
- Other operational and technical inefficiencies.
- Losses being incurred by a majority of the Power Boards, including on account of the reasons I have just now mentioned which render them unviable clients in the debt market.

The gift of economic reforms is the opening of power sector to private and foreign investments. It is for the industry to avail of the investment opportunities in this sector. In a sense, the key to 8 per cent growth is in the exploitation of these opportunities.

Yet another problem area having direct implications for growth is infrastructure other than power, that is, surface transport — roads, ports and railways. Recognising the limitations of budget funding of surface transport development, this sector has also been opened up for private sector participation as the industry is aware. Some of the initiatives taken are:

- The National Highways Amendment Act.
- Issue of guidelines for private sector participation in the port sector within the framework of the Major Ports Act.
- Launching of "Build-Own-Lease-Transfer" (BOLT) scheme of the Railways.

The private sector has already responded with proposals for investment in highways and port projects. These private sector responses have to be intensified and diversified.

The problem in regard to growth in the agricultural sector is that we have assured irrigation only in 30 per cent of the cultivable lands in the country. Rest of the areas are dependent upon rain-fed irrigation. This renders

agriculture vulnerable to the monsoons. It is well known that Green Revolution has been largely a phenomenon of the States of Punjab and Haryana, Western U.P. and Andhra Pradesh. It is principally from the districts of these States that surplus foodgrains are channelled into providing food self-sufficiency for the whole of the country. The strategy for growth in the agriculture sector, in this background, should be based on:

- Green Revolution being taken to the Gangetic East, Brahmaputra Valley and Central India as visualised by our Union Agriculture Minister and his team of experts headed by Dr. Swaminathan.
- Large scale investments in infrastructure for agriculture, particularly for irrigation and soil conservation works and water-shed management.
- Ensuring that agricultural holdings are economically viable to support application of high-yielding variety technologies.

In this context, imaginative channelling of investments in rural development programmes which is at present about Rs. 8,000 crore per annum for promoting agricultural growth is needed. These programmes are basically of two kinds — wage employment and self-employment programmes. Wage employment programmes should be geared to creating infrastructure for agriculture — minor irrigation works, check dams, land development works, etc. Self-employment programmes should be geared to imparting skills on agro-based, off-farm vocations like post-harvest processing of agricultural produce, food processing and rural industries ancillary to agriculture.

Trade and services, including financial services, account for about 32 per cent of GDP. This tertiary sector is directly dependent upon the industrial and agricultural sectors for their growth. With expanding activities in the areas of manufacture and agriculture, the tertiary sector is also bound to grow.

About 21 per cent of our exports are agricultural and allied products. They are largely exported as primary goods. We have to evolve a policy for trading in value-added agricultural products. For years, our Commodity Boards have been grappling with this problem in a product-specific manner. These efforts have to be intensified.

The banking services will have to improve in efficiency concurrently with the expectations of the production, manufacturing and trading sectors. Several reforms have already been introduced in the banking sector since 1991 with the objective of improving the allocative and financial efficiency of banks so as to contribute to economic growth. Business takes place round the clock in some part of the world or the other. Our banking system should be geared to rendering service consistent with this reality. The solution is

modernisation of banking activities — computerised customer service, introduction of card services, introduction of automatic telling machines, introduction of electronic money transfers, etc. There needs to be a revolution in the work culture of the banking employees.

The lifeblood of all economic activities is credit. The industry is aware that on the 15th of this month an imaginative credit policy has been introduced; the bank rate has been reduced; synchronously, term deposit rate has been reduced too; and credit control measures have been scaled down or abolished. It has been estimated that the Reserve Bank of India has in the result placed more than Rs. 8,000 crore with the banks for lending; most importantly, banks have been empowered to take autonomous decisions on lending and on investing in debt securities; Maximum Permissible Banking Finance (MPBF) has been made optional to the bankers. We should now see whether the policy actually translates into action at the bank level. The basic problem with all policies, whether they be of the Government or of the banking system, is that they don't trickle down. Establishments are vested interests in themselves with archaic working styles or are in eternal terror of being faulted by a distrustful supervisory regime. The only solution is what I mentioned earlier — a revolution in work culture amongst the bank employees.

I am a believer in enhancement of labour productivity. I came across a study of the Indian Corporate sector by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) covering the period from 1987-88 to part of the reform period, that is upto 1993-94. One of the significant findings of this study was that productivity of wages has increased. That is, output per rupee spent on wages has increased more or less consistently over the whole period and that the increase was also well distributed over several industries and sectors. I am sure that my industrial friends here may not grudge my reminding them, on the lighter side, that "Yours sincerely" was the Labour Minister since 1991-92. The moral of the CMIE story is that our labour deserves a legitimate share in the fruits of growth, if growth itself is to be sustainable. I am also sure that it is CII's philosophy as well. I remember attending a convention of nearly 4,000 workers organised by the CII sometime back which I did with pleasure.

I remember my Udyog Bhawan days in the early 80s when the then Association of Indian Engineering Industry (AIEI) was making a beginning to conquer the whole industry of India. In less than two decades, the then AIEI has evolved into CII and not merely conquered the Indian industry but, may I say, the whole world industry? The CII's clients today are Prime Minister John Major, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, President Boris Yelstin and, hopefully not long later, President Bill Clinton. With CII there around, can 8 per cent growth be far behind?

Thank you for your attention.

## CREATING A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH\*

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During the first three decades, our GDP growth rate was of the order of less than four per cent per annum. During the seventies, it even went below three per cent. During the 1980s, it crossed 5.5 per cent.

The rate of savings in the country has always been quite good. It has increased from about 11 per cent in the 1950s to 24 per cent in the 1990s. This helped in raising the finances needed for development through domestic savings. During different periods, domestic savings contributed to about 90 to 95 per cent of the finances needed for development. And, the household sector has consistently been the largest contributor to domestic savings. While the range of contribution by the private corporate sector to savings over the years has varied from about 1 per cent to 3.6 per cent, that of the Public Sector has been coming down. It has come down to 1.45 per cent in the 1990s from 3.73 per cent in the 1970s.

If growth is to be accelerated, adequate resources should be mobilised. Government normally raises resources through taxation, non-tax sources, public borrowing, external borrowings and deficit financing. Our experience in the past has been that adequate revenue surpluses are not available for investments. Revenues collected through taxes are used for meeting expenses on interest payments, Non-Plan expenditure, maintenance expenditure, etc. High Government expenditure also cuts into revenue surpluses. Nor has the performance of the States in raising revenues been very encouraging. The Central Government expenditure at the level of Rs. 2.23 lakh crore has been rather high. Nor have additional taxation measures of the Government been adequate enough. We have also been giving large volumes of subsidies — for food, for fertilisers, etc. The aggregate of subsidies for all services provided by the Central and State Governments is around Rs. 1.37 lakh crore constituting over 14 per cent of the GDP. The debt service payments are of the order of 26 per cent. About 29 per cent of the GDP is used for servicing debts.

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\*At the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, (16 November, 1997).

It is to correct the above environment and promote growth that several reform measures have been launched. The practice of budget deficits, a system of using *ad hoc* treasury bills to finance deficits has been discontinued. Instead, temporary mismatches in Government's receipts and payments are accommodated by ways and means advances. Fiscal deficit has been brought down to 5 per cent; taxes have been lowered to ensure better compliance and thereby enhance revenues; budget support for Public Sector Enterprises is being provided on a case to case basis after examination of merits of each case; the establishment of the Disinvestment Commission is meant to help restructuring of public enterprises; about 50 corporations have been referred to the Commission; a dozen companies have been recommended for disinvestment; non-debt creating Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) are being encouraged; FDIs are being channelled towards infrastructure sector. The industrial policy reforms have involved considerable domestic deregulation. Now the private sector has large scope for participation in the growth process.

A significant initiative of the Government has been the opening of the capital market for portfolio investments. Indian companies can access international capital markets by issuing equities abroad through the global depository receipts. Foreign Institutional Investors have been permitted to invest in the Indian capital markets. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is working towards establishing a fair, transparent and independent regulatory structure in order to protect the interests of the investors. The new export-import policy (1992-97) aims at creating a free environment for trade, strengthening export promotion structure, simplification of procedures, enhancing export production and focusing on quality and technology upgradation. The rupee has been made convertible on current account.

All these measures have indeed created the right environment for further economic growth. Now it is for the industry and trade to avail of the opportunities.

Our total GDP at factor cost is about Rs. 300,000 crore, the share therein of agriculture, manufacturing and trade, respectively, being 25 per cent, 23 per cent and 21 per cent. In the manufacturing sector, metal products, machinery and machine tools, electrical machinery, transport equipment and parts, chemical products, etc. have done reasonably well. Growth strategies for every product group have to be designed on a disaggregated basis keeping in view the potential for investment and marketing opportunities consequent on liberalisation and deregulation.

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There are about 1,300 Public Sector Enterprises run by the Central and State Governments. It has been estimated that they account for 55 per cent of our economy's non-household capital stock and one-fourth of non-agricultural GDP. The implications of the Public Sector deficits in terms of their volume and contribution to domestic and external debt, apart from debt service liabilities and opportunity costs, need to be objectively analysed and corrective measures taken in a time-bound manner.

Nearly, 2,75,000 industrial undertakings in the country are sick. They block bank credits of the order of nearly Rs. 14,000 crore. This problem of sickness in industries should also be addressed and scope for measures such as their rehabilitation, recoveries of due and pre-emption of further blocking of bank funds should be investigated.

The demand for infrastructure facilities and services in the country far outstrips the supply of the same. There are significant shortfalls in capacities and there are serious inefficiencies as reflected by power failures, congested roads, inadequate air ports, over-crowded ports and long waiting lists for installation of telephones. Without massive investments in infrastructure, sustainable economic growth is not feasible. It has been estimated by an expert group on commercialisation of infrastructure projects that the requirement of investments in infrastructure is of the order of about 130 billion US dollars. The issue of mobilisation of this level of resources, including through private sector, has to be addressed emergently. The private sector particularly should see in the infrastructure sector, a colossal opportunity as well as a challenge.

The weight of agriculture in GDP being significantly high, investments therein on a massive scale are needed for expansion of crops to non-traditional areas as well as enhancement of productivity. Investments are particularly required for irrigation, soil conservation, high yielding variety technology, etc. As Dr. M.S. Swaminathan has advised, our objective now should be "ever-green revolution".

The Narasimham Committee has given a report in 1991 and recommended reform of the banking system for its commercial orientation. Implementation of the report and modernising the banking system need urgent consideration.

I am sure that all of you do have concerns regarding the potential for developments in our country similar to those being confronted in South-East Asian countries. My considered view is that we don't need to be apprehensive. My reasons are: we are careful in channelling foreign investments in productive areas so that returns on investments do not

become a problem for the investors; we are closely monitoring our budget deficits; and the Reserve Bank of India is keeping a tab on trends towards over valuation of currency.

We are a country in which multiplicity of organisations creates a lot of problems. In politics, it is multiplicity of parties. In the working class movement, it is the multiplicity of trade unions. The manufacturing and business community has its own variant of this phenomenon of multiplicity — that is, multiplicity of Chambers. At the national level, we have the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Associated Chamber of Commerce (ASSOCHAM) and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). I am aware that in quite a few industries engaged in the same business, there are multiple associations. Multiplicity detracts from solidarity and, consequently, from the strength of the concerned interest groups.

Chambers, as interest groups, can be, and are, very valuable sources for providing inputs to Government for policy formulation — like for example, in the matter of deciding on levels of taxation and customs and excise duties. If the Chambers are multiple, their utility for Government as a unified source of policy inputs gets diminished.

The Government also look to the Chambers of Commerce for their participation in the meetings of Joint Commissions of India and other countries to deliberate on trade and commercial issues. Chambers often vie with one another in rivalry to be the sole identified agency for the purpose. It causes considerable difficulty and embarrassment for the Government in choosing from amongst competing Chambers.

If the business community demonstrates greater solidarity, it would serve its own interests better.

Thank you one and all for giving me this opportunity for sharing my thoughts with you on the environment for 'economic growth'.

Jai Hind.

## INDIAN POLITY AND ECONOMY— EMERGING TRENDS\*

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I am honoured to be amidst you here today. I have been asked to share my thoughts with you on the current status of the Indian polity and economy. It shall be my pleasure to do so.

Economic reforms initiated in India in 1991-92 has opened up the economy, liberalized systems and procedures; significant lot of deregulation in several spheres having been undertaken. The various policy measures undertaken since 1991-92 include a market determined exchange rate policy, drastic reduction in import duties, limiting licensing requirements to just 18 industries on grounds of safety, ecology and environment, restructuring of sick public enterprises, dismantling Public Sector monopolies in the infrastructure sectors (power, telecom, airlines, roads, ports, and banking and financial services), apart from overhaul of Foreign Investment regime. Current Account convertibility of rupee has also been introduced.

During the Eighth Five Year Plan period as a whole, (1992-97), our performance was generally better in several spheres compared to the earlier Five Year Plan period — in agriculture, manufacturing, international trade, etc. Our foodgrain production has reached the level of 195 million tonnes. The Balance of Payments (BoP) strengthened considerably. The Central Government's fiscal deficit as a ratio of the GDP declined. Our Gross Domestic Savings went up to the level of 24 per cent. Infrastructure sectors also, excepting for telecommunications, registered growth in Net Output. Inflation was contained at single digit levels.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow since the beginning of reforms has crossed the level of Rs. 9,500 crore, while the approvals are of the order of about Rs. 36,000 crore. The fuel and services sectors are the front runners in attracting FDI. Financial and banking services account for nearly 50 per cent of FDI approvals. In the household sector, India has more than 20 million investors, the second largest in the world.

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\*At the meeting organised by the Korea-India Society on the Current Indian Polity and Economy, Seoul, (2 August, 1997).

By 1994-95, economic growth has reached the level of 7.2 per cent. No doubt, there was a slowdown in the pace of reforms in 1994-95. Nevertheless, growth registered 7.1 per cent in 1995-96 as well. Growth rate is estimated to have been around 7 per cent in 1996-97 also. In the background of economic recession that was being experienced elsewhere in the world, including the developed countries, over the last couple of years our growth has been considered to be significant. Based on our performance during the last three years, we are rated amongst the top ten performers in the world.

Cutting across political parties, by now, there is a general consensus on the inevitability and need for reforms and their continuance. In view of this, transition from a centrally planned economy to market economy has been relatively smooth.

No doubt, much more remains to be done. Overall fiscal deficit needs to be brought down further. Infrastructure needs a significant order of further improvement. Financial sector reforms need to be pursued further.

Our strengths are many. We have a democratic system of governance. Investors' capital and returns, including repatriation, are always protected. We have a good track record in this regard. Dispute resolution procedures in the matter of investment and commercial deals are fair and transparent. We have an experienced managerial class. Our entrepreneurship is reputed all over the world. We have one of the largest skilled manpower in the world. Capability of our people for absorption of skills is high as well.

It is the very vastness of India which made our people inward looking. Now that our economy is opening up, market and investment opportunities are very high. No doubt, 36 per cent of our people live below the poverty line. But, there is a rising middle class, a consumer class with purchasing power which is 250 million strong. This is one of the largest markets in the world. It is precisely for these reasons that there is a lot of interest in India on the part of the developed countries of the world.

Of course, at the political level, for sometime now, we have had unstable situations. The electorate has been returning hung Parliaments, necessitating coalition arrangements. But, these developments should not be taken as any index of adverse implications for the economy, industry or business. This is part of the process of maturing of our democracy. Maturity is to be seen not in the political changes *per se*, but in the smooth transition of power. If we make an analysis of the national political situations across the world, there are a large number of countries which have rainbow coalitions. Japan has had many changes of Governments. But, the Japanese economy is one of the strongest in the world.

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The Republic of Korea (RoK) emerged as a nation around the same time as India achieved Independence and became an independent nation. RoK is seen as a very successful example of export oriented development. From a war-torn, rural and indebted economy, RoK has emerged as an industrial power with several transnational corporations, operating in several areas, be it steel, ships, automobiles, or electronics.

I am always fond of saying that the 21st century belongs to Asia. As oriental people, India and the Republic of Korea have lot to gain and benefit mutually by coming together in economic cooperation, investments and international trade, apart from transfer of technology. The New Horizon Policy of Australia is a Westward looking policy. The Republic of Korea could also benefit by such a policy. The tradition of India has been one of looking Westward on account of historical reasons. Now, we are keen that we should look towards the East as well. Together, Republic of Korea and India can disprove the old saying, "East is East; West is West; the twain shall never meet".

Thank you for your attention.

## OUR INDUSTRY—A VISION FOR THE FUTURE\*

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Calcutta is irresistible for me — I am emotionally involved with this place — primarily because I have spent some of my formative years here and further because, in a way of speaking, I am from the Eastern Region. Calcutta, so to say, used to be the industrial headquarters of British India. The CII has also had its moorings here. I am not surprised that this Partnership Summit should have been organised here.

“A Vision of the Future” is the theme of this Valedictory Plenary. The theme is quite appropriate, placed as we are around the Golden Jubilee of our Independence and at the threshold of the next millennium.

This Summit is also of Indo-British Partnership. Indo-British Partnership is, in fact, a matter of historical association, contemporary cooperation and future expectations. Under the benign leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, we transited from British colonial rule into a sovereign democratic republic without violence. Without rancour, we have become part and parcel of the British Commonwealth fraternity. We have opted for the British parliamentary model of governance. We continue to strengthen and promote democratic values through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Since Independence, we have nurtured our economic, industrial and commercial relations. In the scenario of globalising economies, we look forward to giant strides in Indo-British cooperation. On the cultural side, the Britons and Indians are two separate populations bound by the same language. English continues to be the link language binding different parts of our country. The British Council has been functioning in India with quiet efficiency bringing about linkages between the rising generations of the two countries. The future, indeed, holds out enormous hopes and potential for Indo-British camaraderie. My vision of the future is conditioned significantly by this camaraderie.

When Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made his “Tryst with Destiny” speech on the 14th of August, 1947, he presented us a vision of the future. This vision was one of wielding freedom and power with responsibility; of

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\*At the CII Partnership Summit, Calcutta, (11 January, 1997).

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ending poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity; of treating freedom and prosperity as indivisible even as peace is indivisible; and of being part of a one-world-fraternity. I don't think I can really improve on this Nehruvian vision of the future. But I am convinced that we have a very long way to go in fulfilling this vision.

I read, with great interest, the speech of Prime Minister John Major in this Summit. This speech struck me as John Major's vision of the future of India — India as an Asian regional power, as a world economic power, as a nation of entrepreneurs, as a trading giant, as a country with people of academic excellence, as an achiever of prosperity through competition, as a protector of environment and above all as a strong secular democracy.

In the achievement of the visions of our future, industry has a pivotal role to play — pivotal role, because of its backward linkages with agriculture and forward linkages with trade and commerce. With a comprehensive sweep over every aspect of human life, industry can impact directly or indirectly upon all the basic concerns of our country.

All the problems of our country ultimately stem from the incredible size of its population. In containing the future growth of our population as well as in improving the quality of the population in terms of literacy, employment and income generation, and in terms of reducing dependency ratios, the industrial entrepreneurs have a significant role to play because of their direct interface with the working people. In the organised industrial sector alone, working people are 30 million strong. Employees, I know, are already investing time and resources on population education. This effort would need to be sustained.

It is well known that one of the major reasons for high levels of unemployment in the country is lack of skill based education. Our Asian brothers like Japan and South Korea present us models of close industry-education interaction. Education irrelevant to the world of work not merely creates wastage of national resources. It creates a stock of educated unemployed which would become the ideal breeding ground for social tensions, violence and terrorism. I know that at the level of higher technical education, there are on-going programmes for industry-institution cooperation. This would need to become pervasive at the lesser vocational levels as well. The industry can make a significant contribution in designing vocational courses relevant to the job market and even in running model training institutions.

There is no doubt that in the context of competition unleashed by globalisation of economies, the inevitability of economic reforms has come to

be realised cutting across political ideologies. In the face of the compulsions of globalisation, Deng Xiaoping's China has come to be very different from Mao Zedong's China, having opted for the Socialist market economy.

The rationale of economic reform is very simple. It is one of living within means. The means are to be found from wealth. Wealth has to be generated. Wealth generation can take place only if national resources are deployed efficiently. In countries accustomed to protected economies, there are inefficiencies of resource use. These inefficiencies need to be eliminated by reform. The greater the past protection of the economy, the more the difficulty in carrying out reforms speedily. The reason is that there are inevitable human costs of reforms. For example, if a sick industry has to be closed for effecting economies and achieving efficiency of resource use, people suffer job losses. In the face of job losses, people start asking: why and for whom are the economic reforms being carried out? In true democratic countries with multi-party systems, in the face of short-term job losses, the pace of reforms cannot be easily forced. This indeed is the dilemma of reforms in India. Here again, it is industry-Government partnership which can really help in finding a solution. Industry and Government together will have to find resources for skill training of the working people so that they could be alternatively redeployed. Such skill training may have to be continuous. It is not a one-shot measure. When the economy becomes increasingly competitive, amalgamation of enterprises, induction of new technologies and modernisation are bound to continue to result in manpower redundancies as well as mortality of uncompetitive industries. Hence the need for continuous skill training.

Economic reforms and liberalisation process have implications as much for entrepreneurs as for the working people. Industrial enterprises, having been accustomed to domestic industrial protection in terms of ceilings on national capacities, restrictions on investments from abroad, etc. are faced with new competitors who are technologically and in terms of resources mightier. Hence their call for a 'level playing field'. Having been developed over the years through indigenous efforts, domestic industries would need to be helped in dignified survival and growth. In order to minimise the human costs of reforms, very justifiably, the Common Minimum Programme has been established. The most crucial characteristic of the Common Minimum Programme is one of giving social protection to the economically weaker sections. But how do we give protection for the entrepreneurs who find themselves the weaker parties in the changed and liberalised environment? Obviously, there cannot be a switch back to old types of domestic industrial protection as that would mean a regression in reforms. In the face of competition from foreign investors, a carefully thought out and skilful diversion of foreign capital to gainful but unchartered areas on a priority

basis would be needed. We in India are already making efforts in these lines. The foreign investors, on their side, would also need to look for sustained and long-term partnership with the domestic companies treating them as equal partners for mutual gains and prosperity. They can't afford to be seen as hit and run predators of short-term interests.

While serious efforts at reforms are being made on account of political commitment of the policy makers, in operational terms, the old mind-sets do not seem to have significantly changed down the hierarchy. There is need for the culture of reform and liberalisation to seep down to all the echelons of administration whether it be at the Central or at State levels. Our friends in China for example are able to commission projects in the liberalised environment within a period of 2 to 2½ years from the date of approvals. I should say we in India are not as fast as yet.

International trade is increasingly becoming the lever at the level of WTO for pushing changes in several trade related areas. In the ultimate analysis all the crucial areas of human life can be linked to trade. Because of this reason, there are wideranging apprehensions in the country that in the virtual uni-polar scenario of today in international relations, India could be pushed into unfair disadvantages. While India's membership in the WTO is a reality, while India means to play a constructive role therein and while India's commitment to liberalisation is irreversible, the people of India do look forward to fair and equitable treatment in the framework of a multi-polar international power structure. This indeed is one of the basic reasons why India is also keen on regional economic cooperation, whether it be through SAARC or ASEAN or Indian Ocean Rim Initiative. The fact of life is that the developed part of the world is looking for new markets having saturated their own. India has the advantages of vast natural resources, a growing middle class which is now about 250 million with significant purchasing power and vast reservoir of qualified manpower. India and the Indian market are as much needed by the countries with financial and technological resources as India needs them. In this context, I would remind the audience what Prime Minister John Major said here only two days back. I quote: "The size and richness of your land, and talent of the Indian people make it likely that within 25 years, let alone 50, India will have firmly established herself as one of the world economic powers".

With all humility, I should candidly say that investments of the industry in research and development efforts over the last 50 years have been rather minimal. Efforts have been largely governmental efforts, often laboratory-bound. What we need in our country in the next millennium is a body of productive scientists who would show research and development results of

world class whether they be in the governmental or in the private sector as distinct from routinized, scientific bureaucrats.

Of late, political leaders have come under close public scrutiny. There is ever increasing pressure for transparency of actions on the part of those in positions of power and holding public offices. And, rightly, there is a wave of popular demand for probity in public life. People are also urging for transparency in the relationship between industrial leaders and public office holding political decision-makers. Probity in corporate life is as important as probity in public life.

There are several senior political leaders of the country with statesman like qualities and stature who feel deeply concerned about problems of probity and who are now calling for formal and institutional mechanisms for ensuring probity in public life. I am sure that the CII as the premier organisation of the industry, leaders of the country who really matter, will give thought to this problem as far as it would relate to the corporate world.

India is the world's largest democracy. It is an open society in every sense of the term. It is the democratic traditions which distinguish India as a class apart. The greatest insurance and security for the industrialists, investors and the trading community from abroad is the democratic system of India. I am an optimist and I can assure you all that in the forthcoming millennium India would emerge as a democracy of a greater strength. With sustained efforts for faster demographic transition; for skill development amongst the job-seekers; for reorientation of education to be relevant to the job market; for generation of wealth through productive use of resources; for liberalisation to promote competition; for promotion of transparency in public and corporate life for an equitable economic social order; and for strengthening democratic institutions on a stable basis, India would be a much sought after venue for several bilateral and multilateral Partnership Summits.

Thank you for your kind attention and for the honour of invitation to this Partnership Summit.

Wish you all a Happy New Year.

Jai Hind.

## OUR INDUSTRIAL SCENARIO— CHANGING PERCEPTIONS\*

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I deem it an honour that the Tata Workers' Union is conferring on me the Michael John Roll of Honour for what they consider as my "Distinguished Contribution to the cause of Labour and to the Parliamentary System". The Tata Workers' Union has, in the process, bracketed me with a galaxy of great sons of India, Shri J.R.D. Tata, Shri P.P. Narayanan, President, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Shri R. Venkataraman, former President of India, Shri G. Ramanujam, the veteran INTUC leader and others.

Labour has been my first love. When I shifted from Labour Ministry to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B), as Union Minister, journalists asked me whether I did not consider the I&B portfolio to be "glamorous". I replied: "For me, labour has been glamorous and information is going to be laborious". I meant what I stated. "Labour" spans over all walks of life — social, economic and cultural. It is not given to everybody in this world to be associated with the problems of the working people who are as large as over 300 million in size.

What distinguishes India from many other developing and even developed countries is the vibrant trade union movements that we have. Trade union rights stem from freedom of association which is part and parcel of basic human rights and one of the fundamental freedoms. Freedom of association is also enshrined in our Constitution as a justiciable right. Our experience in legally organising workers into trade unions is seven decades long. Our trade union movement had also been part and parcel of our freedom movement. The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi himself personally gave the lead for working class unity. He started with a single trade union organisation, *viz.* the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC).

We are on our way to celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. This Jubilee Year is indeed a time for taking stock of our trade union

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\*The Thirteenth Michael John Memorial Lecture at the function organised by the Tata Workers' Union, Jamshedpur, (9 March, 1997).

experience. We need to analyse our strengths and weaknesses in the light of international and national trends in trade union movement and with clear insight into the future.

Reports of the International Labour Organisation have brought out that in the world as a whole, by and large, trade unions have been on the decline. Factors specifically attributed to the decline are:

- Unemployment.
- Changing profiles of employment.
- Diversities in work organisation.
- Regimes of governmental regulations.
- Employer responses.

These factors are largely true of our country as well. Our unemployment rate is six per cent. Only about fifteen per cent of the workers have regular salaried employment. About 54 per cent of the workers are self-employed. And 31 per cent of workers have precarious employment, with opportunities only for employment on casual basis. Agriculture is the largest employment, accounting for about 64 per cent of the workers. Manufacturing accounts for 11 per cent of them. Out of the total of about 315 million workers in the country, about 75 million are agricultural labourers and about 10 million of them work in household industries. Women amongst the workers are a highly discriminated lot. Their work participation rate is only 23 per cent, less than half that of men. This rate is much lesser in urban areas where work participation rate of women is only 10 per cent, about 1/5th of that of men. Incidence of precarious employment is much higher amongst women, 39 per cent as against 28 per cent in the case of men. There are an estimated 17 million child workers, losing their precious childhood at a time when they should be in schools. Many of them are working in hazardous employments which are statutorily prohibited.

I have taken the pains of presenting these statistical data in order to project before you a profile of our work-force as well as employment/unemployment situation. In essence, the work-force is highly stratified — main and marginal workers, regular and precarious workers, men and women workers, and the latter subjected to discrimination, adult and child workers, the latter under high levels of exploitation and denied of basic educational opportunities.

This scenario has a lot of implications for the trade union movement. Trade unions need to revise their agenda such that they organise the working people with greater intensity. It is well known that only 10 per cent of the workers in the country are organised, the others falling under the unorganised sections.

Trade union leaders would need to investigate the reasons for labour remaining unorganised. The reasons are not far to seek either. Largely they are incidence of under-employment which drives workers to work under more than one employer, scattered and thinly spread nature of work places, incidence of home-based work, vague employer-employee relationship, etc. There is no short-cut for finding remedies for these problems. Simply, the trade unions will have to enhance their outreach by sheer hard work, involving innovative modalities of accessing the workers wherever they are.

Trade unions need to give special attention to organisation of women workers, considering that it will not merely help in enhancing their labour standards but give them training for access to decision-making positions with their consequent empowerment.

It is a fact of life that workers who are in the manufacturing industries and who are in the organised sector of employment, because of their collective bargaining strength, have been able to secure for themselves far better labour standards than their unfortunate brethren in the unorganised sectors. All trade unions, irrespective of their affiliation, have also been largely preoccupied with organised sector workers to enhance their wages, their working conditions and their social security. While high labour standards for the organised sector workers are indeed welcome, and nobody can grudge the same, obsession with organised sector workers alone is not desirable. Such obsessions are bound to be elitistic.

The labour market is also undergoing a sea-change. National economies are globalising. Economic reforms and the structural adjustments are taking place cutting across the entire globe. Consequently, industrial restructuring is also taking place. The objective of restructuring is getting value for investments. Whether it is Public Sector or private sector, industrial enterprises should be self-sustaining. We can ill-afford a situation in which scarce national resources are invested in industrial enterprises which become sick and which, apart from not generating wealth, are a drag even on wealth generated by commercially viable industrial enterprises. It is in this background, through restructuring which includes modernisation and induction of new technologies, unviable industrial enterprises are sought to be rehabilitated. Modernisation and induction of new technologies call for new skills amongst the workers. It is the demand for new skills which impact on the labour market. Increasingly, the labour market is being called upon by the industries to provide skilled workers, technicians and engineers. Trade unions should clearly take note of these trends and respond positively and re-adjust their agenda.

The first item on their agenda, according to me, should be skill upgradation of the workers and investments on life-long training. Merely agitating for labour protection without demand for skill upgradation of the trade union members is not in the interest of the workers themselves. Occupational skills will enhance demand for labour. Such enhanced demand by itself is bound to result in grant of higher labour standards. In fact, the possession of skills as needed by enterprises is the surest insurance of the commercial viability of the enterprises as well as the social security of the workers.

In this context, I would even urge that there must be a national fund for skill upgradation through continuous education of those who are already employed. Employers could be encouraged by tax incentives for organising in-house courses for skill upgradation of their workers.

With regard to the new job seekers, of course, what is basically needed in this country is skill orientation of educational courses at all levels. Those who are not fortunate enough to join formal educational institutions should be given opportunities for access to non-formal skill development courses. We do have in our country the Open School System, apart from non-formal education systems. It is for these institutions to organise non-formal courses for impartation of employable skills amongst such job seekers.

Over the years, the single trade union organisation with which we started has splintered into several central trade union organisations. Changes in party politics have impacted on the trade union movement of the country. Affiliated to new political parties, new trade union organisations have also sprung up. At the shop floor level, unions have, over the years, become craft-based as well. Multiple trade unions and mushrooming of craft unions are the licence which we can ill-afford in our country in the context of global economic changes. When our industrial enterprises have to remain competitive internationally, their commercial viability should not get debilitated by inter and intra-union rivalries. The need of the hour is working class unity and unity of trade union movement. Legislative measures to bring about this unity has eluded successive Governments for many years. The only practical course, according to me, is soul searching by the trade unions themselves so that they merge all their differences dedicating themselves to the cause of the workers and their industries on grounds purely confined to the industries, workers and the employers. Dogmas and political ideologies should give place for a new slogan — the slogan of upgradation of labour standards through wealth generation by industrial enterprises and by sharing of the same equitably between the employers, workers and the society.

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These days, the hotly debated subject in several fora is accountability. Trade unions also would need to be increasingly accountable. Accountability should become a part and parcel of trade union culture. First of all, they should be accountable to their own members. Periodic internal elections of office bearers have to be organised. They should become accountable to the society by discouraging trends towards cessation of work through programmes like political *bandhs* which have no immediate relevance to the work place. Industrial action should be confined to industries.

In the area of working class unity, we have a lot to learn from countries like Germany and Japan. The true test for industrial action should be whether such action would be consistent with the legitimate interests of the workers and the industrial enterprises; whether it would be consistent with economic interests of the nation and public interest of the people; and whether it is being taken recourse to as a measure of last resort. The need of the hour is a new two-pronged solidarity — between the trade unions themselves and between the trade unions and the enterprises. This is the very essence of the concept of bipartism on which consensus was reached by the Ramanujam Committee. This is also the essence of Mahatma Gandhi's idea of trusteeship.

According to the Father of the Nation, those who wield capital should hold it in trust for the benefit of all — the have-nots in particular. In any case, the capital invested in industrial enterprises, whether it be in the Public Sector or the private sector, are national resources, bulk of which are raised from financial institutions, including commercial banks which, in turn, hold resources raised from tax payers and depositors. Monies invested in industrial enterprises, then, are those held by the employers in trust from, and for, the general public. It is this realisation which should ultimately inform the trade union movement of which the employers and workers are total partners.

The difference between our trade union movement and that in Germany is that in India, it was handed to us from above by our first generation leaders with all good intentions and faith. In the case of Germany, faced with total destruction of their economy, after the Second World War, the social partners, the employers and the workers built trade unionism from below, from at the grassroot level. They developed the concept of co-determination. It is this co-determination between the employers and the workers which is desperately needed today. And, for this, we have to retrace our steps from trade union multiplicity to trade union unity.

Jamshedpur has been a model for industrial peace and harmony. The Tata Workers' Union has created a culture of industrial peace and harmony, under the inspiring leadership of the great luminary Mr. Michael John in

whose memory I am being honoured today and under the enlightened understanding of Shri J.R.D. Tata himself. Tata Steel is not merely an industrial enterprise. It is a movement, if I can put it like that. Whether it be rural development or population education, Tata Steel and its employees have been involved. I can never forget one advertisement of Tata Steel on the electronic media. After presenting several frames relating to rural development, this advertisement ends up with the observation "We also produce Steel". I wish that this Tata spirit envelops the entire industrial scenario of our country so that India comes to be one of the foremost economies in the world in the ensuing millennium.

Thank you for your attention and thank you for the honour conferred on me, which I have great pleasure in accepting with gratitude.

Jai Hind.

## SAFETY IN COAL MINES— IMPERATIVE OF RESEARCH\*

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I have great pleasure in being amidst you today.

The Delegates to this Conference may be wondering what real credential could the Speaker of the House of the People have in a technocrats' Conference like this. I owe some personal explanation.

I come from a mining region of India. I have, in the past, worn the hats of mining employer as well as protector of mining workers as Union Minister for Coal and as Union Labour Minister. People in the mining industry continue to treat me as part of them. Indeed, I belong to your tribe, though not a technocrat. I can even lay claim for some technocratic skill. As the Presiding Officer of the House of the People in India, I have developed my own techniques of controlling noise pollution. Of course, I would hasten to add that I don't intend any breach of privilege of my parliamentary brethren.

I compliment the Central Mining Research Institute (CMRI) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in having organised this prestigious Conference for the first time in this part of the world. I gather that 22 countries are represented in this Conference and that the Delegates are researchers, academics, industrialists as well as Government functionaries. In April, 1993, the 13th World Conference on Occupational Safety and Health met in New Delhi. I am happy that India is becoming the meeting ground for practising scientists and end-users of scientific knowledge.

Mining is one of the biggest single employments in the world. It also contributes to significant levels of Gross Domestic Production of various countries. Considerable volume of international trade is based on it. It is also a basic industry on which downstream industries are dependent. In India, we produce minerals of the value of about US \$10 billion. It constitutes 3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. The share of minerals in the exports of India is 17 per cent.

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\*At the inaugural of the 27th International Conference on "Safety in Mines Research Institutes", New Delhi, (20 February, 1997).

I understand that the focus of the Conference is on the "current status of mines safety research" in its relation to coal mines, metal mines and environment issues. The human being is after all at the centre of all development as well as its end. It is commendable, therefore, that mines safety related research is the theme of the Conference.

Phenomenal technological changes have, no doubt, overtaken the mining industry. The International Labour Organisation has established safety standards. National mines safety laws and institutional infrastructure to implement them have been established too. Nonetheless, fatal mining accidents and disasters do take place every now and then taking toll of human lives. Of course, most countries have, over the last three decades, significantly brought down the death rates. The rate which ranged from 0.54 to 2.71 per 300,000 manshifts has been gradually brought down to the range of about 0.21 to 0.51. Similar trends have been achieved in non-coal mines as well. In relative terms, these figures may appear small. But human costs are too serious to be ignored, even if the relative figures are low.

In all National Mines Safety Regulatory Institutions, as an integral part, there should be Science and Technology Support Service. This Service should have interface both with Mining Research Institutions and Mining Enterprises, serving as an organic link between the two. The terms of reference for this Service could be:

- Review of Mines Safety Standards and evolving new and revised standards.
- Consultancy in development of safe new technologies; safe and reliable equipment and materials; and safe and innovative work practices.
- Hazard assessments.
- Standardization of techniques for monitoring and control of occupational hazards.
- Field evaluation of new mining methods, machinery and material.

The Indian experience of safety in coal mines reflects that the principal reasons for serious and fatal accidents are fall of roof, fall of side, rope haulage, fall of persons, fall of objects, etc. The preliminary report in respect of one of the fairly recent major coal mine disasters in India revealed that it was caused by flooding due to the breach of a river embankment on account of heavy rains. Many of the individual accidents which are serious or fatal as also disasters occur mostly due to the complacency and negligence of workers or managers themselves. This indicates the need for research into the behavioural styles and patterns of the working people. Even as human ingenuity leads to technological developments, it is human failure which ultimately leads to accidents and disasters.

It is well known that dust hazards cause serious disorders such as silicosis, siderosis, liver cirrhosis, Parkinson's disease, lung cancer, etc. Noise hazards, reportedly, impact on heart rate, respiration rate, blood pressure and even blood composition. Mine gases and fumes like nitrogenous oxides, carbon monoxide, hydro carbon, hydrogen sulphide, etc. are quite lethal. Considerable lot of researches have already been carried out in regard to all these problems. They need to be continued so that preventive measures are updated, simplified and made user friendly and cost effective.

Mining enterprises should build up their own in-house Research and Development formations. One of the principal mandates for such formations should be methodical collection of data on the performance of Mines Safety and Occupational Health Standards. Such data should be fed back to Mines Research Institutions for refinement and revision of existing standards and evolution of new standards.

The struggle of the humankind for survival and development has always been a challenge to nature and violence to environment. Whether it be in exploring the bowels of the earth or the depths of the oceans, human beings have been prodigal children squandering the bounties of nature and endangering future survival of their kind.

Mining without protection of environment cannot be sustainable. Vast expanses of scarred surfaces of earth looking like moon scape are common sight in mining areas. Gigantic profusion of oil spills during off-shore drilling for fossil fuel destroying invaluable marine life is reported every now and then. Air and water do come under incredible levels of pollution, causing serious health hazards to people and adversely impacting on floral wealth and agricultural activities.

Significant investment of human and material resources need to go into researches on environment friendly mining. In particular, special attention should be given to:

- Monitoring and minimising of atmospheric pollution, particularly controlling dust concentration.
- Study of regimes of surface and ground water.
- Agrological studies through plant and soil analysis.
- Soil reclamation and waste land management.
- Subsidence management.
- Noise environment studies and establishment of noise standards.

We are living in the space age. Remote sensing through satellites and conjunctive ground-truth studies of mining areas have to be taken recourse to.

I am sure that the interaction here between the Delegates who are from diverse backgrounds would facilitate meaningful sharing of experiences and dissemination of knowledge regarding the grassroot problems of the mines would pave the way for further researches to make mining activity lucrative for business, occupationally safe for workers and environmentally acceptable to the societies of today and tomorrow.

With these words, I am immensely pleased to inaugurate this Conference.

Jai Hind.

## MINING INDUSTRY—POTENTIAL FOR BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT\*

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I have great pleasure in being with you today in this International Conference. I compliment the Mining, Geological and Metallurgical Institute of India in having organised this Conference on 'Business and Investment Opportunities in the Mining Industry'. I compliment the Ministries of Coal and Mines too in teaming up with this effort.

Production of minerals in India reached the level of US \$ 10 billion during the year 1995-96. It contributes 3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. During recent years, the growth rate of minerals sector has been about 12 per cent. The share of minerals in exports of India is 17 per cent. We do have large imports as well which account for 40 per cent of all imports, including petroleum. There is a significant trade gap.

Five minerals — iron ore and concentrates, limestone, chromite, copper and zinc concentrates — account for about 75 per cent of the total value of 29 important minerals within the purview of Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 1988.

Until 1993, the mineral sector was highly protected. As part of the process of economic liberalisation, in 1993, the New Mineral Policy was introduced. It provides for: investment by private parties, domestic and foreign; foreign equity upto 50 per cent; more liberal treatment in the case of captive mines; and dereservation of thirteen minerals, including ores of iron, manganese, chromite, gold and diamond. The Mines and Minerals Act was amended in 1994 enabling for companies registered in India, access to prospecting licenses and mining leases with liberalised tenures.

The general rationale and approach of the Government towards reform policies has been that the budget should be relieved of the pressure for major capital investments so that budget resources could be used for the basic needs of the people — nutrition, health, education, etc.

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\*At the International Conference on "Business and Investment Opportunities in Mining Industry", New Delhi, (16 December, 1996).

It is also the policy that investments, particularly foreign investments, are channelled towards infrastructure. Minerals being crucial for basic infrastructure industries, private and foreign investments are specially encouraged in this area.

Business and investment opportunities in the mining sector in India, as in other sectors, have to be viewed in the context of the country's special strengths which are:

- A democratic system of governance.
- An excellent track-record of protecting investments, particularly foreign investments.
- Existence of dispute resolution mechanisms consistent with modern business practices.
- Domestic capabilities in terms of existence of exploration and research and development institutions and adequate technical manpower.

The new mineral policy is geared to industrial and export development, keeping the present and future perspectives in view. This would call for land and offshore exploration, investments in education, research and development and environmental and ecological protection. Production of minerals where India has the strength of surplus has to be augmented. There are at least a dozen minerals of this category. Economic and marginal categories of mineral deposits would need to be developed. India being a country of considerable agricultural diversity, fertilizer minerals would call for special investments. This would not merely help in the exploitation of the concerned mineral resources and direct employment in that sector but will also have multiplier effect in terms of productivity and employment dividends in the agrarian sector.

I have had the privilege of working as Union Minister for Coal. Coal mining is crucial for power generation in the country. Seventy per cent of all power produced in the country depends on coal. Indian coals have high ash content. This is a reality from which we cannot get away. At the same time, this is a resource which we have to necessarily use. Technologies to orient Indian industries to the consumption of high ash coal are needed and have to be explored in greater depth. There is also a big deficit in coal availability, considering that the demand assessment for the 10th Plan is of the order of about 650 million tonnes as against the feasibility of producing only about 500 million tonnes from proven resources.

Scattered over different parts of the country, it has been estimated, bauxite reserves are available to the extent of about 300 million tonnes. Exploitation of these reserves for producing metallurgical grade alumina is not merely a techno-economic challenge but bristles with problems of environmental protection. These reserves of a significant order often occur in areas rich in floral and faunal wealth.

In the area of special metals and minerals, gold, diamond, etc., the private sector has a special role to play following up on the New Mineral Policy and the liberalisation of the mining law and rules.

Foreign investors, particularly multinational companies have understandably evinced special interest in gold resources. The national programme of gold exploration has identified small and medium sized deposits with reserves of the order of over 15 million tonnes. Innovative techniques of exploiting these reserves have to be gone into.

India is one of the top exporters of granite which occurs in different parts of the country in bewildering varieties of colours and shades. Quarrying, cutting and polishing techniques have to be developed and employed to promote this export oriented natural resource. Maharashtra and Karnataka are the States which lead in granite reserves. Naturally, then, it could be expected that lead developmental activities may have to be concentrated in these States.

Technology upgradation in mining is crucial. It is needed for enhancing productivity; cutting down costs of production; and ensuring occupational safety. For this purpose, the industry, equipment manufacturers and research institutions have to closely interact.

Transfer of technology cannot be a fragmental effort of merely supplying machines. It needs to be a total package of equipment and process consistent with the location-specific geo-mining conditions. It should be given attention at all phases — planning, surveying and production.

No doubt, we do have national capability built up over the years in terms of institutions like the Geological Survey of India, Mineral Exploration Corporation and specialised institutions like the National Institute of Rock Mechanics. Capacity building is a continuous process. These institutions should continuously update themselves, considering the stunning speed with which technology has been advancing.

Minerals are bulk commodities. Surface transport infrastructure needs to be significantly improved, consistent with developments in the mining sector. Inland movement, particularly by Railways, needs special attention. Enhancement of port capacities is needed as well.

The developing countries which command mineral wealth are caught in the dilemma of having to import technology and resources which they don't have and of the nagging apprehension that they may be selling themselves out in the process. The solution lies in matching foreign investments and technology transfer with the host country's natural mineral resources with equitable returns for the investor and the host country. There is no ready-made formula for finding this solution. The investor will have to be alive to the political sensitivities of the host country. The host country, in turn, has to be pragmatic.

I am sure that this Conference, bringing about as it does a confluence of minds and interests from the industry, Government, research institutions and academia, will come out with meaningful conclusions and recommendations which would prove to be valuable inputs for policy formulation vital for the growth of the mining industry. I wish all success for this Conference. With these words, I am immensely pleased to inaugurate this Conference.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year too.

Jai Hind.

## PAPER AND PULP INDUSTRY— IMPERATIVE OF MODERNISATION\*

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I am happy, and feel honoured, to be with you this morning. Thank you for your kind invitation to inaugurate this Third International Exhibition on Pulp and Paper Industry.

It is common knowledge that the world production of pulp and paper has registered a very sharp increase over the last five decades — that is, 50 million tonnes to 250 million tonnes. The world average per capita consumption of paper has been around 45 kgs, USA topping the consumption at over 300 kgs. The Asian average has been about 20 kgs and that of India 3.5 kgs. Since 1987, a significant development has been the reduction of production in developed countries. At the same time, Asia has sharply increased production. The profile of world production and consumption has to be understood in the perspective of the overall raw material shortage of one-third of the total requirement.

India has an installed capacity of 4 million tonnes for production of paper and paper boards. Economic liberalisation in the country has substantially enhanced demand for these products. Wholesale prices since 1991 have increased by about 100 points. In the face of acute shortage of raw materials and underutilised capacities, India has been importing pulp and waste paper. The present level of imports is of the order of about 130 million US dollars.

Environmental and bio-diversity considerations have come to adversely impact on raw material availability for the industry in a drastic manner. It has been estimated that the annual increment in productivity of forests in India is only 0.5 cubic metre against 2 cubic metres in Europe and USA. While productivity level being significantly low in India, extraction of wood from forests for the industry, apart from other purposes, has been far in excess of incremental production. In simple terms, forests have come under over-exploitation. The actual forest cover in the country is only about 20 per cent of the landmass against the 1988 National Forest Policy prescription of 33 per cent.

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\*At the inaugural of the International Exhibition on Paper Industries, New Delhi, (14 December, 1997).

We have attempted to meet the raw material shortage of the industry by undertaking industrial plantations of fast growing soft wood species like eucalyptus in degraded forest areas. We have also promoted agro forestry in community and private lands, including through social forestry programmes. National Agricultural Financing Institutions like NABARD have also been pressed into service for providing investment support. The message of the industry having to be environment friendly has been extensively given. The industry also has shown ready response. Paper mills in the States of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, for example, have undertaken farm forestry programmes. There have also been attempts at diversifying the species identified for plantation purposes.

While these efforts facilitate enhanced availability of raw materials, more intense land utilisation and higher incomes for the farmers, environmentalists do have reservations on grounds of adverse impacts of industrial plantations for pulp and paper industry on bio-diversity.

While undertaking and encouraging industrial plantations, special care would need to be evinced in the area of the productivity of the identified species. Already, attention is being given to this. For example, eucalyptus seems to be specially preferred because it is amenable to regeneration by the technique of ratooning, that is, after the first and second harvests which are usually done in a gap of 6 to 8 years in areas of heavy rain fall, re-plantation does not become necessary. Fresh shoots develop into full growth. These days, we have the advantage of tissue culture. Scope for extensive application of tissue culture technology to enhance productivity of different species is worth being investigated.

There are limits to availability of land space for plantation purposes. There are also pressures for alternative uses of land. So if industrial plantations are undertaken, there could be issues of opportunity costs. In view of these factors, the industry has to look for alternative raw materials. Indeed, considerable work as well as field application have been done in this regard. Non-conventional raw materials like bagasse from sugar mills, cereal straws (straw of rice and wheat for example), non-wood crop fibres like jute, cotton linters, waste paper, etc. have to be used.

Use of bagasse, of course, is well established. India is the world's largest producer of sugar cane. She produces 150 million tonnes of sugar cane per annum. This level of production, it is estimated, should translate into 4 million tonnes of paper. Paper mills in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are already using bagasse as raw material. India and Taiwan also use rice and wheat straw as raw material. According to the estimates, in India, by the year 2000, availability of these two cereal straws would be about 200 million tonnes; 25 per cent of the same may become available for the paper industry.

The use of these alternative raw materials is not without problems. Sugar mills themselves use bagasse for their fuel requirements. Production of sugar cane and cereals takes place in vast geographical areas. Aggregating these raw materials and then transporting them involve considerable expenditure.

Waste paper also is extensively used in India for production of paper, either straight or mixed with agricultural residues. But the main problem with waste paper is that the bulk of it — about 80 per cent — is consumed as packaging material. This is also the reason for import of significant quantities of waste paper from abroad.

The paper industry in India has a serious structural problem as well. A large number of them, being in the small and medium sector, have uneconomic scales of operation. The international capacities range upwards from 500 tonnes per day. For long, investments have not also gone in for modernisation or upgradation of technology. A study undertaken some time back under the Ministry of Science and Technology has reflected that investment of the order of 1250 million US dollars would be required for the modernisation of the industry in India. East Asian and Scandinavian countries have reportedly gone in for "rebuilding technology". Under this technology, improvements are made on the machinery in existing mills taking into account the limitations of mechanical designs, space, etc. The lead time in modernising the existing mills by application of the rebuild technology, it is understood, is also much lesser than needed in establishing new units. The paper mill machinery manufacturers themselves, in this context, may have to examine the scope for improving their own capabilities to meet the needs of the pulp and paper industry for their modernisation, including through rebuilding technology.

In the three-day Conference that is scheduled to take place alongside this Exhibition, incidental but crucial matters such as energy and water conservation are also going to be discussed. The paper mills machinery of the Indian units, a description of which I have already given, has serious problems in the area of energy efficiency. Specific energy consumption amongst the various units reportedly varies very sharply. This serious lacuna also has to be rectified. Improved boiler efficiency, better steam utilisation, improvement of power factor, maintenance, etc. are specific measures to be undertaken.

As Union Labour Minister, I have come across several complaints from the public about pollution of rivers by discharge of paper mill effluents. The pulp and paper industry has to discharge its social responsibility as well by investing on pollution control measures.

The industrialists, technocrats and experts assembled here, I am sure, will go into all the problems that I have mentioned. To summarise, my suggestions are:

- Enhance production of forest species relevant to paper industry, bringing in better land use.
- Enhance productivity of the species required as raw materials by taking recourse to appropriate cultural practices as well as modern agro technologies.
- Harmonise industrial plantations and bio-diversity needs.
- Diversify raw materials, identifying non-conventional sources.
- Maximise draft of existing alternative raw materials like waste paper, bulk of which the industry is not accessing now.
- Modernise industry and for the purpose investigate into scope for application of rebuilding technology.
- Examine scope and need for improving the manufacturing and supply capabilities of paper mill machinery manufacturers.
- Introduce energy efficiency.
- Control pollution.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Exhibition. I wish all success in their business for the exhibitors and the pulp and paper industrialists.

Thank you.

## RESEARCH IN CHEMICAL INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION\*

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I am happy to be here this morning in this distinguished gathering of academics, researchers, scientists and industrialists. Thank you for your very kind invitation.

Let me offer my felicitations to the University of Delhi on its Platinum Jubilee Celebrations as part of which this 34th Annual Convention of Chemists has been organised. Let us also, on this occasion, pay homage to Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, founder of the Indian Chemical Society.

The Convention, I find, has an ambitious Agenda for focusing on major areas of chemistry research, apart from a programme of Seminar on "Nature and Environment" and a programme for honouring young scientists in recognition of their outstanding contributions. I compliment the organisers of the Convention for their thoughtful agenda and activities.

Chemistry has come to occupy a central place in the day-to-day lives of the people all over the world. Rapid industrialisation has resulted in use of chemicals as an integral part of the social and economic development of societies. A large number of articles of household use have come to be dominated by chemicals. Sulphuric acid goes into the production of rayon yarn; nitrogen compounds are in great demand for agricultural activities; large quantities of different fertilizers are accordingly produced; every year 33 million tonnes of chemical fertilizers and 61,000 tonnes of pesticides get lodged on our agricultural lands in India; chlorine has effective use as a bleaching agent; sodium carbonate or washing soda is plentifully used in production of soaps; there are about 9,000 units in India in the pharmaceutical industry producing drug and pharmaceutical products and the total value of production of bulk drugs comes to over Rs. 15 billion; value of formulations produced is about Rs. 79 billion; indeed, the size of

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\*At the Thirty-fourth Annual Convention of Chemists organised by the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Centre for Bio-Medical Research and Department of Chemistry, University of Delhi, Delhi, (17 December, 1997).

the world pharmaceutical market is US \$5.5 billion; in India, its size is US \$1.8 billion; three million tonnes of dyes and dyestuffs are also produced in the country. The phenomenal growth of chemical industries has come to pose threat of serious damage to health, environment and property.

Detergents, sewage and agricultural fertilisers pollute water ways and contaminate ground water. It has been estimated that 21 cities along the Ganga release more than 1,200 million litres of waste water into this river.

There are eleven cities in the country where the degree of air pollution is very high. The major pollutants are smoke of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, sulphur oxides, hydro carbons, etc.

We have just now had an International Conference on Global Warming. In simple terms, green house gases play a vital role in preserving the balance between energy incoming from the sun and outgoing from the earth into the space. Man made emissions disturb this equilibrium causing global warming. Climate change on account of global warming, it is held, may result in disappearance of small Island States apart from rising ocean levels devastating agricultural operations and endangering certain marine species. Extensive and intensive application of chemistry in our socio-economic life may contribute to man-made emissions disturbing the energy balance. Researchers and scientists do need to go into the short, medium and long-term impacts of applied chemistry.

The very mention of the expression 'chemical industry' should bring to mind, in our context, the infamous Bhopal gas leak disaster. It generated awareness of potential hazards to the community from chemical manufacturing enterprises. The Governments of States quickly reviewed the occupational health and safety systems in chemical manufacturing processes. Hazardous chemical manufacturing activities were identified. The Factories Act was amended in 1987 comprehensively to build in provisions to regulate and control hazardous processes. A Scientific Commission appointed by the Government of India also studied the impact of the Bhopal gas leak on life systems and environment and went into the question of creating a scientific base for prevention and control of such disasters in future. The Ministry of Environment notified rules relating to manufacture, storage and import of hazardous chemicals and micro-organisms as well as management and handling of hazardous wastes.

Many more industrial disasters in the chemical industry of India have occurred. They have been caused by poisonous emissions and explosions, avoidable storage of huge quantities of hazardous chemicals, inadequate waste disposal practices, etc. These factors also have to be seen in the overall context of production of various chemical substances on increasing

scale over the last three decades — fertilisers, pesticides, dyes and pigments, drugs and pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals and petrochemicals, etc.

In India, we have also enacted certain laws like The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, The Environment (Protection) Act, The Hazardous Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, etc. Under the Environmental Statement (Audit) Rules, responsibility has also been cast on the industry to submit information every year to the State Pollution Control Board to report on waste disposal methods, environmental surveillance and analysis of air, soil and ground water.

It may not be feasible to ensure total environment protection in the chemical industry. We may have to concentrate on prevention of generation of wastes. Research and developmental efforts have to be directed towards this end. In other words, clean technologies have to be established.

Occupational safety and health assume importance in the context of the work place. This has to be provided within the framework of a Safety Management Policy at the plant level. Every production site has to have a Safety Department under a Safety Manager; this Manager should have a formal degree in chemistry or chemical engineering; the main tasks of the Safety Manager could ideally consist of collection and exhibition of physical data; creation of a safety data base; appropriate and timely designing of processes and plants; conduct of safety analysis for all new processes and installations; organisation of refresher course of instructions for the employees to help them maintain basic objectives; medical check-up for employees; regular maintenance of technical inspections, etc.

Considerable lot of bio-medical research on work related diseases has been conducted in India. Areas identified as requiring priority attention are:

- Environmental carcinogens.
- Behavioural toxicology.
- Occupational lung diseases.
- Cardio-vascular disorders.
- Antagonistic/synergistic effects of multiple toxicant exposure.
- Simple tests for toxicity evaluation.

Toxic chemical exposures often do not produce durably observable or immediately disabling effect. The impact of the exposure may not be of a nature immediately identified either by the sufferer or an examining doctor.

Therefore, the tendency is often to assume that the absence of obvious symptoms is an end to the problem. The occupational health system should guard against this tendency.

As I indicated earlier, the Agenda of the Convention is rather extensive. For the sake of brevity, I shall now conclude confining myself to the few thoughts I have felt are important and which I have already presented to you in relation to your Agenda. I wish the Convention all success which it is bound to be, particularly considering the down-to-earth interactions that would take place between scientists and industrialists. With these few words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Convention.

Thank you for your kind attention.

## AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY—NEW HORIZONS\*

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I am very pleased to be present amongst you this morning in this elite Automotive Fair, the largest in Asia. Let me thank the CII and the Associations of Automobile Manufacturers and Automotive Component Manufacturers for the honour extended by them in their invitation to me to inaugurate this Fair.

The automotive industry of India is as old as the Independence of the country. In this sense, this Fourth Auto Expo is in the nature of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the industry. Until the middle of the 1980s, the passenger car market was dominated by two producers, Premier Automobiles and Hindustan Motors. The induction of Suzuki technology around this time, with the entry of Maruti Udyog, marked the commencement of a sea-change in the industry. The 1990s witnessed significant liberalisation, initially in terms of reduction in excise and custom duties and subsequently in terms of de-licensing and the entry of new players. As on date, almost all major automobile manufacturers of the world have set up manufacturing bases in the country — both for catering to domestic market and for meeting global demand. Contemporary designs and up-to-date technologies have been inducted. Auto components manufactures have also kept pace with the growth of the automobile industry.

India has also emerged over five decades as the largest producer of three wheelers and the second largest producer of two wheelers in the world. Significant progress has been registered in the area of agricultural machinery as well — tractors, power tillers and self-propelled combine harvestors. Vast expansion of mining activities and of the construction industry apart from colossal infrastructure projects have necessitated the production of earth moving and construction machinery.

Technology tie-ups and joint ventures have become pervasive and exemplary in the automotive industry as a whole, and this trend has come to show the way as well for development of other industries in the country.

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\*At the inaugural ceremony of 'Auto-Expo 98', New Delhi, (15 January, 1998).

The total sales of passenger cars, two wheelers and three wheelers, jeeps, commercial vehicles and auto ancillaries at the commencement of 1995-96 reached the level of Rs. 24,000 crore (equivalent of US \$ 6 billion). The two-way international trade of India in transport equipment around this time was of the order of Rs. 1,500 crore (exports of Rs. 600 crore and imports of Rs. 900 crore) — equivalent of US \$375 million.

No doubt, CII's Industry Review for the period April to October, 1997 presents a low and negative growth of the automotive industry in terms of production, sales and exports — that is, relative to the corresponding period during 1996-97. However, exports of auto components are reported to have registered a growth of about 10 per cent. This situation seems to have arisen due to demand stagnation caused by a mix of several factors — restricted vehicle finance, slower cash flows due to delayed payments by the buyers, fewer projects, cut backs on Government funding, lack of export finance, etc. However, imports in general have grown by about 7.5 per cent during the first half of the year as against 5.2 per cent during the corresponding period of last year. This overall growth in imports seems to be an encouraging signal, indicative of recovery of industrial sector.

It would be worthwhile, in the present context, for the industry as well as the Government to conduct a review of the country's policy relating to automotive industry. Naturally, this review should be based on our experience in this sector, given the backdrop of phased liberalisation initially of the light commercial vehicle segment and subsequently of the passenger car segment. As in the case of many other consumer durables, the market for vehicles, particularly for passenger cars, is also segmented. The general experience is that the market for small car segment is much higher than that for medium size and large size cars. The problem that the industry and the Government should go into concerns the modalities of investments in medium and large size car segments being made viable and sustainable in the medium and long-terms. Automotive industry has high technology and investment orientation and, therefore, policies should encourage long-term commitments. A whole range of inter-related issues have to be analysed keeping in view that India does offer a comparatively advantageous production base for the global market as a whole and not for mere domestic market. Our policy parameters should not detract from the comparative advantages of India. The range of issues that I have referred to would include those relating to investment parameters, transfer of technology, fuel efficiency, orderly fuel pricing, realistic stipulations and commitments on indigenisation, export marketing linkages, import liberalisation commitments, etc. Special care would also need to be taken to ensure that our policy is a genuine manufacture oriented policy and does not end up into a mere assembly and screw driver technology policy.

The contribution made to the automobile components industry by small and medium scale entrepreneurs, I should say, has been phenomenal. Indeed, these entrepreneurs represent a new generation of industrialists who have exhibited high capability for absorption of technology and product development, including for exports. It is a matter of pride that our transport equipment, principally auto components, find their way into over 150 countries of the world. We also import from over 50 countries.

It is in the interests of the automotive industry to have a healthy transport system. Increase in population, unregulated urbanisation and industrialisation have brought the transport system under serious strain. The road length per million population in India is about 3,500 Kms. This figure is about 24,000 Kms for USA and Canada, 6,500 Kms for UK, 9,000 Kms for Japan and 46,000 Kms for Australia. These data are reflective of the comparative inadequacy as well as congestion of roads in India. Out of a total of 3 million Kms of road length, only 1.4 million are surfaced. That is, more than 50 per cent of the road length in the country does not have proper surface. A large number of road accidents take place every year causing casualties. In 1995, we had a vehicle population of 30 million, about 300,000 accidents took place and 60,000 persons were killed and 300,000 persons injured in these accidents. About 15 per cent of the accident take place in metropolitan towns.

The annual revenue from road transport as of 1995-96 was Rs. 13,500 crore (equivalent of about US \$ 3.5 million). The entire Plan outlay for the five years of the Eighth Plan (1992-97) for the road sector was Rs. 17,000 crore (equivalent of US \$ 4.2 million). That is, we are spending only one-fourth of the revenue from road transport for the sector per annum. Obviously, this is not adequate. No doubt, we are implementing a number of externally aided projects with assistance from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank with an overall outlay of about Rs. 3,000 crore (equivalent of US \$750 million). For these projects, in any case, rupee resources have to come from within the budget of the Government. Government budget cannot provide all the resources required for the development of the transport sector. Transport infrastructure needs to be funded significantly by the private sector. A large number of road infrastructure projects are already on offer for private sector participation. Ten States of India have offered projects for by-passes with an outlay of US \$ 400 million. Five States have offered projects for bridges on rivers with an outlay of about US \$ 40 million. Projects for four-laning of 7,000 kilometers of existing national highways are also on offer.

Another vital aspect of the automotive industry is its implication for environment. Oil accounts for nearly 97 per cent of energy consumption in the transport sector. By now, it is general knowledge that green house gases trap heat in the atmosphere and endanger climate. Transportation is a major source of emission of carbon dioxide, a very potent culprit amongst the green house gases. It has been estimated that an automobile emits about 20 pounds of carbon dioxide for every gallon of gas burnt. The new international accord, the Kyoto Protocol, calls for drastic cuts in green house gases within 15 years. The automotive industry, in this context, has a significant role to play. New technologies to get better gas mileages have to be evolved and investments made for the purpose. It is gathered that automotive majors of the world like the Ford Motor Company and Toyota are already on the job and are optimistic about introduction of significantly improved fuel efficient technologies. Governments would also need to give support for induction of fuel efficient technologies in terms of tax concessions.

I am aware that this Fair brings together the best of talents in the automotive industry of the world and participants will have intellectual, apart from business, exchanges on matters of their professional interests, including those I have mentioned. I congratulate the organisers of the Fair and wish the Fair and the allied Conferences success to the mutual benefit of all the participants. With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Auto Expo '98.

Wish you all a very happy business year and thank you very much.

## ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY— INEVITABLE IMPERATIVE\*

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I am happy to be here with you today at this 'Surya Awards' function.

I should first of all compliment the Indian Institute of Rural Development and Social Services which has been doing very useful work in the area of alternative sources of energy in terms of field research, extension and awareness generation, particularly in the rural areas.

Over the last five decades, we have indeed made phenomenal progress in every sector of development — whether it be agriculture, industries or trade and commerce. We have achieved self-sufficiency in food through Green Revolution. In fact, we have become exporters of agricultural products. We have established basic industries and a multitude of small scale industries. Our exports in engineering products have been increasing. Through Operation Flood programmes, the dairy industry has undergone a sea-change. We have exploited our marine resources, including through mechanised fisheries operations, and have become one of the largest exporters of certain marine products. But, in the area of energy, we are deficit and stagnant. In fact, one of the largest single items of import is fossil fuel — of the value of about Rs. 25,000 crore which constitute nearly 21 per cent of our total imports.

Whether it be household needs or needs of agriculture or industries or transport, the most crucial element is energy. Like many other parts of the world, we have been dependent upon conventional sources of energy. This has serious implications not merely for our economy as a whole because of huge imports, but also for environment.

Majority of the people of India are dependent upon firewood and natural biomass for domestic energy requirements. Natural biomass is closely linked to agro-climatic conditions. In areas of heavy rainfall, there is considerable production of biomass and generally people have easier access at lesser cost to biomass in such areas for meeting their domestic requirements.

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\*At the "Surya Awards" function organised by the Indian Institute of Rural Development and Social Services, New Delhi, (12 March, 1997).

But there are vast areas in India where rainfall is scanty. Biomass is simply not available in such areas either for domestic energy requirements or for cattle. In such areas, people have to pay a heavy cost for meeting fuel requirements, apart from having to travel long distances. In such circumstances, people have a tendency to poach into reserved forests as may be available causing denudation of forest cover, with consequent deleterious effect on ecology and environment.

In the olden days, being fully aware of this kind of problems, as part of the policy of forest conservation, Governments used to raise fuel reserves from which fuel used to be supplied to the people through forest depots. As far as I understand, in many parts of the country, this system has vanished. According to our National Forest Policy, we should maintain at least 30 per cent of our land area under forest cover. Latest assessments made, including through remote sensing by use of satellite and by conjunctive ground truth verification, reveal that our present forest cover is less than 11 per cent.

Requirements of industrial raw materials have also put tremendous pressure on land use for forestry purposes. For production of plywood and pulpwood, large scale industrial forest plantations are being taken up. This again is a factor which seriously constrains use of forest lands for production of fuel wood.

As many of you may know, land-man ratio is yet another factor which has implications for fuel availability. Where land is densely populated, growth of huge habitations and major constructions, including housing facilities, result in vegetative cover being removed. This scenario is particularly true of urban and suburban areas. Field researches have revealed that often, in such circumstances vegetative cover, including in forest areas, is removed for providing fuel supplies to urban and suburban areas, particularly to meet the requirements of the poorer sections of the people and catering institutions. Trade in biomass by its movement from the rural to urban areas is in fact a commercial activity.

Poor people who are daily wagers and who are underemployed cannot afford to buy petro gas. They cannot also afford to buy their fuel requirements at one stroke even for a month because of lack of liquidity, their cash flow being from day-to-day based on their daily earnings. When they buy the fuel requirements in instalments, over a whole month, in the aggregate they end up spending much more than they would spend in case they bought their fuel in one lump. They also often end up spending more than those with comparatively better means. It has been estimated that for the poor people, for meeting domestic fuel requirements, expenditure on fuel as a percentage of their total expenditure on fuel and food together ranges anywhere between 7.5 per cent and 50 per cent.

No doubt, we have been, of late, investing huge amounts on social forestry in order to meet the domestic fuel requirements. This is a sound programme, particularly as it is based on fast growing soft wood species. Experience also shows that even products of social forestry are increasingly being used for industrial purposes — for meeting pulpwood requirements. A study of end use of social forestry products would be worthwhile in this context.

A lot of biomass in the country also goes without being put to economic use. It has been estimated that biomass availability in the country has a potential for producing 17,000 megawatts. We need to evolve innovative and sustained methods of using biomass. Already there are nine biomass research centres in the country distributed in different agro-climatic regions. These centres have developed several packages of practices relevant to different fuel wood species. Non-Governmental Organisations need to liaise with these centres for the purpose of transferring technology as well as giving feedback to these research centres based on field experience. Technologies have to be evolved for use of biomass for cooking applications, village electrification programmes, etc.

A major programme for introduction of biogas plants in different parts of the country is also under implementation. It has been estimated that the country has a potential for establishing 12 million biogas plants. As against this, over the 15-year period of the implementation of the National Project on Biogas Development, we have been able to put up only 2 million biogas plants.

Biogas plants based on use of cowdung is a fairly costly proposition. Only people owning cattle can afford this. It has been estimated that for an economically viable biogas plant, at least 4 heads of cattle would be required. Apart from this, cowdung is used in straight application as organic manure in agriculture. No doubt, cowdung after use in biogas plants can still be used for agriculture. Messages have to be carried to farmers in regard to this matter through intensive and extension activities.

Considerable work has been done on development of fuel efficient cooking devices as well. Several models of improved chulhas (ovens) have of course been introduced. We are not in a position to supply some of these devices in huge numbers as are in demand. Cooking device models have to be standardised, popularised and mass produced.

We do have several areas in our country which are rich in wind energy resources. For the purpose of electrification of rural habitations as well as energising agriculture, wind energy would need to be tapped intensively wherever feasible. The estimated potential of wind energy resources is 20,000 megawatts. We have not exploited a fringe of our potential. The installed wind energy capacity as of now is about 700 megawatts.

Microhydel power generation is again an area in which much work needs to be done. When we have enormous constraints and competing demands on capital resources, hydel power generation involving significantly lesser investment is an alternative to be encouraged. Transmission costs could be significantly cut and hydel energy economically produced and utilised near about rural habitations and small agrarian watersheds. Estimated microhydel potential in the country is 20,000 megawatts; we have achieved a capacity of only about 125 megawatts and we are making headway to reach the level of about 250 megawatts. This is an area which calls for considerable research and development for standardisation and cost reduction in manufacture of equipment.

Photo-periods are very long in various parts of our country. Solar energy holds out enormous potential. Whether it be water heating or electrification of small habitations, solar energy has been found to be quite feasible. Through rural development programmes and other national programmes like on literacy, solar panels have to be intensively popularised. One of the basic field problems faced in the use of solar energy is in respect of maintenance of solar panels. This is a managerial problem. Servicing facilities to attend to the functioning of solar panels in our country with thinly spread population in millions of habitations have to be organised through innovative managerial techniques.

We continue to be a country of low energy intensive life pattern. In industrialised countries, considerable energy is consumed for running air conditioners and heaters. In our country, this is not necessary in many parts. But there are vast parts of India where, because of sheer compulsions of climate, we have to provide air conditioners and heaters. As the economy develops and living conditions improve, at least areas with extremes of heat and cold will have to be provided with considerable lot more of energy. Non-conventional and alternative sources of energy have to be intensively tapped.

Non-conventional energy is a vast subject. I don't intend to indulge in a long discourse on every aspect of this subject. I thought that I should touch on at least the peripheries of the subject. It is for institutions like the Indian Institute of Rural Development and Social Services to specialise on the subject for the ultimate betterment of the people of our country. I wish the Institute all success in its efforts. I felicitate the nominees for the Surya Awards 1996.

Thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## LABOUR WELFARE— AN ABIDING CONCERN\*

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It is just over a year since the Pension Scheme for the Provident Fund subscribers was brought under implementation. The Ministry of Labour, the Employees Provident Fund Organisation and the members of the Central Board of Trustees can be proud of the Scheme. The Scheme benefits about 20 million working people. Perhaps, this is one of the largest social security schemes in the world.

I would like to recall on this occasion certain basic concerns which had been kept in view in formulating this Scheme. The Provident Fund subscribers had been operating their accounts virtually as savings bank or current account to meet various items of current expenditure. Not all of this expenditure would have provided security against fall in income on retirement. There were also tendencies towards non-application of advances drawn against provident fund balances for the purposes for which they were drawn. This was symptomatic of savings for the rainy day being utilised for consumption expenditure. In order to correct these practices and tendencies, it was felt that one part of provident fund collections should be firmly put aside for providing social security under diverse circumstances — job loss, incapacitation, loss of spouses, etc.

I know that our CITU friends had their reservation regarding the Scheme. Mainly, they wanted pension to be given as a third benefit. While this approach may have its merits, we as a poor developing country can ill-afford this. A third benefit may have to be funded through the Government budget. There is dire need for budget resources which are mobilised largely through transfer of income in terms of taxation to be deployed on national asset creation, wealth generation and alleviation of poverty amongst the jobless.

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\*At the First Annual Celebration of "The Employees Pension Scheme", New Delhi, (23 November, 1996).

At the time of formulation of the Scheme, and of amendment to the EPF law, apprehensions were indeed expressed on behalf of some sections of provident fund subscribers that the Scheme was not necessarily most remunerative from the subscriber's point of view. The matter has also been agitated in courts of law. I can only say, in this context, that very sound actuarial assessment of the Scheme from all points of view was made. According to the norms of the International Social Security Association, the basic parameters that should be borne in mind in respect of any social security scheme are: solidarity, security and sustainability. That is, the scheme should bring under its umbrella working people who collectively benefit out of it on an equitable basis; the scheme should be secure in that the investments are safe; and the scheme should sustain itself from its own returns. These factors have been kept in view with due care and diligence that could feasibly be taken. Most importantly, the scheme does provide for annual reviews. We should ensure that these annual reviews are mandatorily made. Then alone, the scheme will carry credibility with all those to whom it is applicable. Nor would it be appropriate for the PF subscribers to treat these annual reviews as mere exercises in collective bargaining. While the PF Organisation should demonstrate transparency in the reviews, the members of the Central Board of Trustees and trade union friends should demonstrate responsible responsiveness in the matter.

Trade union leaders and members of the Central Board of Trustees, then and now — if I understand it correctly — have expressed serious concerns about the capability of the Provident Fund Organisation to ensure prompt and accurate delivery of services. I know that the staff of the EPFO can demonstrate significant commitment to the implementation of the Scheme and to delivery of services. If they do not, I can assure all of you, my dear friends, the working people are not going to take it easy. Any symptom that the care of the Pension Fund given to the trust of the EPFO is not given proper attention could invite devastating reactions.

In this context, I may make a few suggestions: the buildup of the bureaucracy should be kept to the minimum; the Scheme should be implemented in a decentralised way; the pensioner should be in a position to get his dues on the appointed dates in his habitation in a post office or a bank as the case may be; the law and the Scheme provide for creation of pension schemes which are equivalent or more beneficial by the establishments and the workers themselves coming together; this should be facilitated to the maximum extent feasible; and the Government or the Provident Fund Organisation should come into the picture in the case of such establishment level schemes only for limited regulatory purposes so as to ensure the security of funds under such schemes.

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Of late, it has been the policy of the Government to divest themselves of the responsibility for managing the investments of the resources of Provident Fund, Pension Fund, etc. The simple reason is that they have felt that in the long run the servicing liabilities for the Government are higher than the returns. The Reserve Bank of India also has withdrawn from the management of the Provident Fund. The responsibility for investing the Pension Fund accruals has since been given to the State Bank of India. It should be ensured that there is regular interaction between the Provident Fund Organisation at the level of the Central Board of Trustees and the senior functionaries of the State Bank of India so that the propriety and prudence of investments and their cost effectiveness are transparently brought under periodic analysis.

Sometime back, the Central Board of Trustees decided to make the PF law applicable even to ten or more workers. I don't know whether this decision has been implemented. I had suggested, considering that this decision would enhance the number of establishments to be covered in a significant way, that the scope for implementing this decision through the Public Provident Fund Scheme should be explored. If this has not been done already, I would recommend to the Hon'ble Minister for Labour his personal intervention in the matter.

I am sure that the Pension Scheme is in the safe hands of Shri Arunachalam, the Hon'ble Minister for Labour and his band of committed officers, not to speak of the ever vigilant veteran members of the Central Board of Trustees. I wish the Scheme ever increasing success for the benefit of the working people.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## STRENGTHENING COOPERATIVES\*

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I am very pleased to be here with you at this inaugural of the First Convention of the Parliamentarians' Forum for Development of Cooperative Movement.

The Cooperative Movement in India is 93 years old. While saying so, I am linking cooperation with the enactment of the first law in the area — Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904. If I can put it like that, this law which spearheaded our cooperative movement Stemmed from rural indebtedness. In a sense, it was a measure of alleviation of rural poverty with which indebtedness goes. Nine decades later, we have come a long way. Cooperation is pervasive. Be it agriculture, marketing, industries, housing labour, public distribution, consumer needs or banking, cooperation is clearly centre stage. Indeed, it is part of our planning and developmental processes, a way of life.

Today, in our country, cooperatives have a membership of nearly 200 million. The cooperative infrastructure consists of about four lakh member societies. Their total working capital is of the order of Rs. 1,19,000 crore.

The cooperative sector now accounts for 43 per cent of all agricultural credits disbursed, 21 per cent of fertilizers produced, 34 per cent of the fertilizers distributed, 61 per cent of sugar production, 27 per cent of wheat procurement and 11 per cent of textiles production.

The strength of the cooperative movement is that it represents grassroots level action, decentralised action. People with a common concern come together with solidarity, raise resources by contribution to shares, prepare their memoranda and articles, create their own managerial structure, man the organization by their own elected representatives and organize activities for mutual benefit. If I can put it like that, cooperation is synonymous with economic democracy and self-governance.

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\*At the First Convention of the Parliamentarians' Forum for Development of Cooperative Movement, New Delhi, (30 July, 1997).

The most successful cooperative venture, as everybody knows, is in the area of dairy development. The "Operation Flood" programmes stand out as examples of the economic revolution that we can bring about in our country through the cooperative movement and autonomous resource mobilisation.

The Indian Farmers' Fertilizers Cooperative Ltd., (IFFCO), as a multi-unit cooperative of three decades of standing and with its spread in different States, is another classic example of cooperation in the industrial sector. Its performance in the manufacture and marketing of fertilizers is in the nature of a lesson which Public Sector Corporations engaged in the production of fertilizers could emulate.

Now that we are passing through a phase of economic reforms and have opted for de-regulation and liberalisation, the cooperatives also would need to re-adjust their operational styles. Dependence on Government support for capital and subsidies, to whatever extent it may obtain now, will have to be increasingly reduced by the cooperatives. The captains of cooperatives, if they are to preserve and increase the share of the cooperatives in the country's economy, will have to clearly appreciate and understand the compulsions of changes in national resource deployment that are bound to be dictated by concerns of competition in the economy. There are many compelling demands on national resources. Indeed, it will be a contradiction in terms if the Government were to mobilise resources and part with the same in any substantial measure for providing financial support to cooperatives which are themselves meant to mobilise resources on their own. True, Government support was needed in the earlier years of our planning and development to boost cooperation as a value and as a movement. Now that we have gained experience, cooperatives should increasingly take the Government off their backs. They should learn lessons from success stories amongst themselves. This will help them become truly autonomous as "non-State" enterprises.

The spirit of the Brahma Prakash Committee Report on the Model Cooperative Societies Bill was one of relieving the cooperatives of Government controls and regulations. Dependence on Government for financial support on the one hand and demands for relief from Government regulations on the other obviously cannot go together.

I am aware that there is a body of opinion that the economic efficiency of cooperatives should not be assessed in terms of profitability, but in terms of optimisation of services to the members. We cannot afford to spell out parameters of efficiency in vague and general terms. Delivery of services cannot be effected without internal resource generation in terms

of profits. There should be no quarrel, however, in maximising services to members from out of fresh wealth generated.

Take the Banking Sector for example. The cooperatives have a big presence in banking. Cooperative banks are as good as other commercial banks. The parameters for cooperative banking transactions cannot be substantially different from those applicable to other commercial banks. Systematic efforts at deposit mobilisation, asset generation, maximisation of returns thereon, establishment of self sustaining economic ventures so that bad debts are not created, low administrative over-heads, modernisation of banking transactions like through computerised customer service, prompt recoveries of advances, etc. are all parameters which should inform prudent cooperative banking as well.

The fact of life in our country is that cooperatives do have their political clout. Indeed, the management of many cooperatives is politicised. President K.R. Narayanan, at the time of his being installed in Office, has called for the development process being de-politicised. He has called upon the entire country to rise above politics in the matter of bringing about economic development. This call is as much relevant at the micro level as well to the management and good governance of cooperatives.

I have always believed that our parliamentarians should specialise on specific subjects so that when they come to hold decision-making positions, they can be leaders of policy changes. I am sure, many of you have had hands-on experience in the administration of cooperatives. I hope that this Forum of Parliamentarians will spawn specialists in cooperation which is a vital and viable route for bringing about economic development through grassroot action in highly diversified areas.

With these words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Convention. I wish the Convention and the Forum all success in their endeavours.

Thank you for your attention.

## URBAN COOPERATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE\*

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I have great pleasure in participating in this Seventh All India Conference of Urban Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies.

The Urban Cooperative Banks mobilize deposits of about Rs. 20,000 crore. Against the deposits of scheduled commercial banks which are of the order of about Rs. 300,000 crore, this constitutes 6 per cent. This is no mean achievement.

Our urban cooperative infrastructure is of special significance in today's context. It is the experience all over the developing world which has been undergoing economic reforms, that there is significant rural-urban migration and informalisation of organised employment. The World Employment Report 1996-97 brought out by the International Labour Organisation has put the figure of the unemployed in the world at one billion. About 225 million people live in urban areas in our country. The job seekers amongst them is about 16 million according to Employment Exchange Data (August 1996). While the urban middle class is thirsting for finances for supporting economic activities, the unemployed amongst them are increasingly looking for credit facilities for their survival. In this background, the role of Urban Cooperative Banks and credit societies, with their policy of lending for priority sectors and the weaker sections, assumes special sanctity. Indeed, they symbolize the nation's concern for equity and social justice.

I gather that in the urban cooperative sector, a movement for creation of Mahila Banks has been successfully launched, the State of Maharashtra being in the lead, and that this has been conducive to development of entrepreneurship amongst women. The impact of economic reforms and structural adjustment could be severely felt, particularly by urban women. Considering this, the Mahila Bank movement is worthy of being strengthened further.

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\*At the Seventh All India Conference of Urban Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies, New Delhi, (27 November, 1996).

The role of the Urban Cooperative Banks and credit societies should be seen in the overall context of the reform of the financial and banking sector since 1991. The entire banking system has had to be brought in conformity with internationally recognised prudential accounting norms of income recognition; asset classification; provisioning; and capital adequacy. Interest rate structure has had to be rationalized. The Bank Nationalisation Policy of 1969 has also been reversed and this has witnessed the emergence of private banks and competitiveness. The whole objective has been to improve the allocation and financial efficiency of the banks so as to contribute to economic growth.

It is common knowledge that the structure of the urban cooperative banking system in the country is characterized by regional imbalances — Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu accounting for 80 per cent of the 1500 banks and 87 per cent of the deposits and loans and advances of all these banks. What can be the strategy for removal of this imbalance? Is it releasing these banks from the regulatory framework of the cooperative laws? May be, this requires close scrutiny. If the cooperative laws are the villain of the piece, how is it that these banks have been successful in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu? Perhaps, the success stories of these States offer lessons to be drawn upon.

In the context of improving the efficiency of the Urban Cooperative Banks and credit societies, through the modality of giving them more autonomy, considerable lot of thinking has already gone in. A Model Cooperative Law has been under consideration of the Government of India in the Ministry of Agriculture for sometime now, based on a draft given by the Choudhary Brahm Prakash Committee. Concurrently, a proposal for amending the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act is also under consideration of the Agriculture Ministry. There is also a school of thought that co-operative companies could be formed by appropriate amendments to the Companies Act. The concept of cooperative companies has not found universal acceptance amongst the cooperators in the country. In the meantime, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has enacted a new law for the creation of mutually aided cooperative societies which, reportedly, provides for a considerable autonomy option.

Whatever be the modalities of vesting Urban Cooperative Banks with autonomy, it is indeed indispensable and the solution lies in the hands of the cooperators themselves to forge national unity on this theme.

The service of the urban cooperatives would need to be professionalised too. In simple terms, this means :

- Bringing all the banking transactions to be in conformity with the basic parameters subsumed under the strategy of bank reform I have already referred to.

- Systematic efforts at deposit mobilization and asset generation.
- Establishment of a policy of prudent cooperative finance, particularly for promoting self-sustaining economic ventures so that bad debts are not created; and maximisation of returns on assets.
- Keeping down administrative overheads.
- Modernization of banking transactions — computerized customer service; (reportedly some Urban Cooperative Banks have even opened computerised *on-line* services); collaborative efforts at introduction of card services, of traveller credits, of Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs), of electronic money transfers, etc.
- Establishment of appropriate statutory recovery mechanisms, networking with State Federations and District Associations which has reportedly been done in Maharashtra; and bringing down non-performing assets.
- Establishment of a monitoring system that would relay early warning signals about impending sickness.

The customer is always the king. It is keeping this in view that the Reserve Bank of India has brought the *Bank Ombudsman Scheme* under implementation. This is not applicable, as of now, to the cooperative sector. The National Federation may give objective consideration to having its own *Ombudsman* for urban cooperative institutions.

Cooperative education is as much a need of the day as it was at the beginning of the present century when the Maclagan Committee of the then Government of Chennai and the Royal Commission on Agriculture emphasised it. Of course, over the last eight decades, much has been done in this area. As of now, the National Cooperative Union and the National Council for Cooperative Training are doing salutary work in training cooperative functionaries. Much more needs to be done. For the size of our country, training of just over 10,000 persons in a year is not adequate. The future of the urban cooperative institutions is a function of the quality of officers and directors in whose hands their destiny lies. They should have a clear perception of the basic cooperative principles and laws, Government policies, banking directives and nuances of various kinds of transactions.

I shall now conclude wishing the Conference all success. I hope that the proceedings of the Conference will provide meaningful policy inputs for the Government to strengthen the Urban Cooperative Bank Movement. I have great pleasure too in inaugurating the Conference.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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# IV

## HOMAGE TO NATIONAL LEADERS

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## NETAJI—THE COLOSSUS OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE\*

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The colossus of India's freedom movement, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose has today come to take his place in these hallowed premises of the Parliament of our country, though not in flesh and blood. He is immortal in a living sense too. He lives in the hearts of millions of our countrymen. His ideals are timeless too.

Most often, it is experience that makes a revolutionary. Netaji was born as such. He rebelled against academic establishment as a student leader, against the British and even against the moderation and passivity of Mahatma Gandhi's non-conformism. He came to symbolise the radical and militant dimension of the freedom movement. He was an enigma for all. His ideals and vision transcended his contemporary times.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore while showering tributes on him characterising him as *Desh Nayak* said : "Subhas Chandra, I have watched the dawn that witnessed the beginning of your political *sadhana*. In that uncertain twilight there had been misgivings in my heart and I had hesitated to accept you for what you are.....You have come to absorb varied experiences... enlarging your vision so as to embrace the vast perspectives of history beyond any narrow limits of territory....."

Netaji was a human being of rare versatility. He was a philosopher. Philosophy was indeed his major in higher education. He imbibed the thoughts of Aurobindo Ghose and Swami Vivekananda. No surprise, then, that with an incredible sense of otherworldliness he denied himself the security of Civil Service and opted for the rigours of a soldier of our Independence movement, suffering prison life repeatedly.

For the British rulers of India, Netaji was a fugitive from law. But for the people of India, he was the ambassador of their cause of freedom. The

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\*At the unveiling of the statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Parliament House Complex, New Delhi, (23 January, 1997).

Provisional Government of Azad Hind established by him abroad and his effort to invade his motherland from abroad to end British rule was a moving epic. Writing to Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji said that the sole objective of the Provisional Government was liberation of India and once that mission was achieved, he and his comrades would like to retire.

His alliance with Japanese in fighting the British stemmed from his diplomatic skill. He was quick to see that the enemy's enemy is a friend and he saw the Japanese in that mould.

Netaji professed and practised secularism. In his secular world, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians and the Sikhs were comrades without conflicts.

Three weeks from hence our Rashtrapatiji will be inaugurating an International Conference of parliamentarians from all over the world in which political participation by women will be discussed. More than half a century back, Netaji had made women's political participation a reality by organising the Rani Jhansi Regiment of the Indian National Army.

Today is the 100th birth anniversary of Netaji. Let us dedicate ourselves to live by his ideals of selflessness, patriotism, national unity and integrity, secularism and impatience for change so that in the millennia to come, we can hold our heads high and live in dignity.

My special compliments to Kartik Chandra Pal, the sculptor for his life-like recreation of the *Desh Nayak*.

With these words, I welcome all the distinguished guests.

Jai Hind.

## V. K. KRISHNA MENON—A GREAT PATRIOT\*

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It was three days back that we observed the 101st Birth Anniversary of Late Shri V.K. Krishna Menon. He hailed from Kozhikode in the Malabar district of British Madras Presidency. On his father's side, he had a princely lineage. On his mother's side, he could trace his lineage to one of the most celebrated Dewans of the State of Travancore.

He had his education upto the pre-degree level in the modest but time honoured educational institutions of Kozhikode. Having taken History Major, naturally, he took keen interest in the British system of parliamentary democracy. He was fascinated by the political philosophies of John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx and Engels. Having done his graduation in the Presidency College in Madras, he was attracted by the Theosophical Movement of Dr. Annie Besant and her Home Rule League. He also came to be associated with Indian National Boys Scouts Association. In 1924, he went to U.K. with Dr. Arundale.

Thereafter, he lived there for 28 years. He started his life there as a teacher at St. Christopher School, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. He did Political Science in the London School of Economics where he became a student of Professor Harold Laski. By 1934, he had taken M.Sc. Degree, after advanced studies in Economics, Politics and Psychology and also completed the law course and became Barrister, Middle Temple.

He came in contact with the great intellectuals of the day, Beatrice Webb, Sir Stafford Cripps and Bertrand Russel. He was also an active Labour Party worker, member of the Socialist League and participated in local government.

The struggle for India's Independence had to be fought both on the Indian and the British soils. On our land, the struggle was carried on for six decades commencing from the first session of the Indian National Congress in 1885 under the Presidentship of W.C. Bonnerji. The struggle on the British

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\*At the Meeting of the members of Parliament to commemorate the 101st Birth Anniversary of Shri V.K. Krishna Menon, New Delhi, (6 May, 1997).

soil was spearheaded by Shri V.K. Krishna Menon. Having been initiated by Dr. Besant in the Home Rule Movement in India, he continued to work under the Commonwealth of India League in U.K. With untiring dedication, he shaped the minds of the British people, parliamentarians, intellectuals and decision-makers in the cause of India's freedom.

In 1930, the Commonwealth of India League was converted into the India League with the exit of Dr. Besant. This development was also brought about on account of Shri Menon's close cooperation with the Indian National Congress which passed the Poorna Swaraj Resolution at its Lahore Session.

During Shri Menon's struggle for our Independence on the British soil, highlights after 1930 were the India League's Parliamentary Delegation to India in 1932 and his deputation to the World Peace Congress in Geneva in 1935. The report of the Parliamentary Delegation back in U.K. was a major milestone in creating significant awareness amongst the British about the validity of India's cause for freedom. Shri Menon also struck a bond of personal friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru which later on developed into strong political partnership between them. He assisted Mahatma Gandhi during the First Round Table Conference. Having parted company with the Labour Party for a while on the issue of self-determination for India, Shri Menon joined the Party again in 1945. He was, thereafter, closely associated on negotiations on transfer of power. After the Second World War was over, he got the Labour Party to commit itself to self-determination for India.

After India attained Independence, he became the first High Commissioner to U.K. from 1947 to 1952. He was the Chairman of the Indian Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly from 1953 to 1962. He made outstanding contributions in the United Nations. Termination of the Korean War, vacation of British, French and Israeli occupation of Egyptian territories, including the Suez Canal, repatriation of Korean Prisoners of War, termination of the Indo-China war, etc., were some of the more important matters on which Shri Menon's personal contribution was very significant. He projected to the world that whichever be the power or the nation, human rights violations were unacceptable and that self-determination was the inalienable right of colonised countries. He established that Kashmir was an integral part of the Sovereign Indian Republic and by sheer perseverance shifted Kashmir out of the multilateral agenda of the United Nations and made it a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan.

As Defence Minister, from 1957 to 1962, he laid the foundations for the self-sufficiency of our defence forces. Laying stress on capacity utilisation of ordnance factories, production of heavy vehicles for the army and modernization of the airforce and the navy were his contributions. For him, the take-over of Goa from the Portuguese was a simple issue of wiping out the last vestiges of colonialism in India.

Following upon Chinese aggression in 1962, Shri Menon had to lay down the Office of Defence Minister. Several reasons have been attributed to the country's performance in the face of the Chinese. But Shri Menon did demonstrate candidness and intellectual integrity in admitting that he had banked on diplomacy rather than military measures in dealing with the Chinese.

Having been a member of Rajya Sabha initially from 1953 to 1957, he was member of the Second, Third and Fourth Lok Sabhas from 1957 to 1962, from 1962 to 1967 and 1969 to 1970, respectively.

Shri Menon looked upon the Constitution as an instrument for securing economic development, distributive justice and political pluralism. He saw no contradiction between the individual liberty and socialist society, so long as the articulation of individual liberty did not result in exploitation.

Shri Menon was a federalist. He believed that State autonomy was not a matter of condescending concession but the cohesive force for ensuring national unity and integrity. He clearly saw the divisive and destabilising potential of religion, language, castes and communities and wanted these forces to be strongly discouraged.

The Constitution, the electoral laws, political parties and inner party democracy within political parties, according to Shri Menon, were closely inter-related. He felt that democratic contours of political parties were not internal to the parties, but were a national matter.

Shri Menon cautioned about external assistance for economic development, including industrialisation. This caution was not based on any dogma, but on his basic concern for economic independence. He was immensely aware of our technology shortfalls and in fact wanted external technology and expertise without giving room for imperialism through the economic route.

Shri Menon was one of the architects of the policy of Non-Alignment. He believed in national autonomy in decision-making, each country taking its decisions in its own national interests. Non-Alignment for him, therefore, was a means of reflecting national policies in international relations. Joining power blocs — Western bloc or the Soviet bloc — according to him, would have compromised national sovereignty and autonomy. Shri Menon viewed it as a policy of peace, steering clear of military dependence. He did not have any pretensions that Non-Alignment was a mechanism for maintaining balance of power. But, then and now, Non-Alignment survives. It has survived through politics of power blocs through *detente*. It is alive today during uni-polar trends. It is there to stay.

We have half a century of experience in trying to alleviate poverty. Shri Menon visualised that peace, development, economic strength and respect in the world at large were not capable of being achieved by us unless the gap between the rich and the poor was eliminated. Social justice, according to him, was one of the motives for our Independence struggle and was the first pledge to be redeemed. He believed in the Welfare State model in which there would be social security for the masses.

Shri Krishna Menon was indeed a very colourful personality and a giant amongst Indian leaders. He symbolised intellectual integrity from which flowed the courage of his convictions. In India and abroad, it is that courage which spawned his detractors and made him friendless. His almost single-handed and incredible contribution to India's Independence with his base on the British soil and his phenomenal performance in international politics with his base in the United Nations were over-shadowed by the developments of 1962. Cooler minds of later years will, however, not fail to assign him the place rightfully due to him in the history of our nation.

Thank you for your attention.

## FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED— SYMBOL OF NATIONAL UNITY\*

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I feel honoured in having been invited to preside over this National Solidarity Day which is the 92nd Birth Anniversary of President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed.

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Saheb was himself a symbol of national unity in that he hailed from Assam in the North-East and belonged to a minority community.

Son of Col. Z.A. Ahmed, an Indian Medical Service Officer, Ahmed Saheb, having had his early education in UP and Punjab and collegiate education in Delhi, finally came to be a barrister from the Inner Temple, London. He was a staunch nationalist. He rose to the position of the President of our country. Having joined the Indian National Congress as a primary member in 1931, he held ministerial portfolios in the Government of the pre-independent State of Assam. He was an associate of the Father of the Nation, offered Satyagraha and suffered prison life for long spells on the charge of being a threat to colonial rule. He also served as Minister in the Government of Assam in 1962.

In the 1960s, he had been a member of the Rajya Sabha as well as the Lok Sabha and held several portfolios as Union Minister — Irrigation and Power, Industrial Development, Company Affairs, Food and Agriculture and Education. He will be remembered for his new Industrial Policy with accent on small scale and ancillary industries and backward area development, and for monopolies and patents laws. He had represented India in the United Nations and Food and Agriculture Organisation. He had extensively travelled all over the world before he was elected President in August 1974.

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Saheb played a significantly moderating role in the Muslim affairs of the country, often understanding their problems

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\*At the Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Late President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, New Delhi, (13 May, 1997).

concerning representation in Government services, communal amity and encouragement to Urdu. He maintained harmonious and cordial relations with Muslim leaders of different States. However, he scrupulously avoided organisations preaching parochial and fissiparous tendencies. When he passed away in February 1977, we lost a nationalist and a statesman who stood for national unity and who advocated social cohesion through education of the people, inculcation of scientific temper and imparting technical skill amongst them, poverty eradication and family welfare as a strategy for achieving the same.

On this 92nd birth anniversary of President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, it is only appropriate that we remind and re-dedicate ourselves to the basic concerns of national solidarity.

What are these concerns? Foremost amongst them, of course, is the mix of castes, communities and religion, which is endemic to India. It has two faces — the primordial face and the humanistic face. The primordial face is one of obscurantism, lethal instincts and vendetta. The humanistic face is one of compassion and community uplift. The former face is to be seen in mutual religious hatred, social ostracism, vocational stratification and economic exploitation. The latter face is to be seen in the lasting contribution of community organisations — be it the Christian Church, the Hindu institutions or Muslim societies to education, nutrition, health and preparation of people for employment.

The admixture of power politics with the mix of castes, communities and religion has always tended to result in unleashing primordial forces. It is rather tragic that the intensity of this phenomenon has assumed undesirable proportions over the last decade. In the process, 'secularism' is being bandied about as a political slogan, different interpretations being given to its attributes. The practice of politics has almost made secularism a divisive factor, strange and incredible as it may seem. These trends should be halted if national solidarity is to be safeguarded. I would even go to the extent of urging that we should stop debating secularism because the more we debate, the more we seem to be getting divisive. That secularism is an axiom for us is there for us to see in the very first sentence of our Constitution. And, axioms need not be debated. Let us bring castes, communities, religion and politics to converged-use, and not abuse. Let the humanistic forces be harnessed in strengthening the solidarity of the nation and in making our society humane and enlightened.

How do we become enlightened? By education. By definition, education removes ignorance. If ignorance is removed, archaic mind-sets are changed; and civility sets in for good. And, a civilized society remains a unified society

as well. We have already resolved that 6 per cent of our GDP would be invested in education. This resolve only needs to be practised. Nor is education a mere matter of resource deployment. Concurrently with investments, the content and process of education at all levels should be oriented *inter alia* to the concerns of national solidarity. A whole lot of measures is needed to address these concerns — designing of curricula, stipulation of syllabi and training of teachers themselves. Because, what is involved is inculcating a value to be integral to thinking process and behavioural patterns among the present and rising generations.

Language is a highly sensitive factor. It is a matter of sentiment; and is, therefore, highly inflammatory. It is in this realisation that the post-independent political structure of our country has been designed by linguistic reorganisation. The framers of our Constitution also have envisaged language as an instrument of national unity and integration. A whole chapter in our Constitution has been devoted to language-management for purposes of administration, education and language development itself. The underlying principles envisaged in the Constitution for language-management are:

- Respect for linguistic diversity.
- Respect for linguistic minorities.
- Respect for the composite culture of India.

It is consistent with these principles that separate official languages for separate States have been provided for; the medium for inter-State and Union-State communication has been provided for; the Three Language Formula with primacy for instruction in the mother tongue has evolved; and eighteen languages have been included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution itself for language development. And, the special direction for development of Hindi itself is that it should draw from the richness of these eighteen languages.

Our linguistic policy is to be seen as a policy of harmony; of equity; of cultural continuity; of unity in diversity, unity itself being brought about by a strategy of gradualism.

Every now and then, we do experience spurts of linguistic chauvinism. These should be discouraged strongly as what is basically at stake is national unity and integrity. Much blood has been spilt in our country in the name of language. Our equitable and gradualist language policy should be jealously guarded.

The economic division of the country into haves and have-nots is a factor that has very serious adverse implications for national solidarity. About

40 per cent of the people live below poverty line despite five decades of planned efforts at rural development and poverty alleviation. Indeed, we have a plethora of schemes to address the problems of the rural and urban poor. But the question is whether these schemes are effective in achieving the basic objective of poverty alleviation. This objective is not capable of fulfilment unless two basic measures are taken:

- Productive use of resources so that economic development is self-sustaining and wealth-generating.
- Preparation of the poor by skill development amongst them to secure employment and thereby share in the gain of economic development.

If these measures are not taken, our poverty alleviation schemes may end up as dole-giving activities, the poor remaining poor and getting helplessly driven to terrorism, drug running and other social evils which are not conducive to national unity.

It is, indeed, keeping in view the socially and politically disruptive character of poverty that the United Nations observed its Golden Jubilee by organizing the World Summit for Social Development. We should live up to our commitment made in this Summit to eliminate social exclusion by terminating economic deprivation of the poor and strengthen national solidarity.

In terms of this commitment to eliminate social exclusion, we need to lay special emphasis on a fair and equitable deal for the minorities, women and children. Such a deal would necessarily have to be not merely non-discriminatory but should appear, and perceived, to be so.

This opportunity for me to preside over today's function is a matter of special significance to me because I too am proud of being a nationalist from the North-East as President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was. Thank you again for this honour and for your kind attention to some of my thoughts on national solidarity.

Jai Hind.

**BIJAYANANDA PATNAIK—  
A GREAT SON OF INDIA\***

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Bijayananda Patnaik was a sitting member of the Lok Sabha representing the Aska parliamentary constituency of Orissa. Affectionately known to the common people as Biju Patnaik, he hailed from a family of freedom fighters, ideologues and patriots in Cuttack, in Orissa.

During his formative years, he came under the impact of Mahatma Gandhi and the great nationalist sons of Orissa, Gopabandhu Das and Madhusudhan Das.

He joined the freedom struggle and actively participated in the Quit India Movement in close association with Aruna Asaf Ali and her underground activities against the British. He underwent imprisonment from 1943 to 1946 in the Red Fort, New Delhi, Ferozepur, Lahore and Cuttack.

He dared the Dutch and with the support of Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, threw his lot, at considerable personal risk, with the freedom fighters of Indonesia in their struggle for Independence. He was associated with the Nepalese democratic movement as well.

The services he rendered for the nation at the call of Panditji in the area of diplomacy at the time of Chinese aggression in 1962 are part of our history.

His great contribution to the country's democracy was the role he played tenaciously and repeatedly in Orissa, and at the national level, for forgoing Opposition unity through times of fractional politics. Indeed, he proved that the delight of political life is as well in the Opposition.

Like Hamilton and Madison, the framers of the American Constitution, Biju Patnaik believed that national unity should be preserved through federalism. For him, federalism was an economic doctrine, not a political slogan. He even called for a United States of India in which financial resources would equitably flow to the States consistent with their exploitable natural resources.

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\*Obituary reference in the Lok Sabha on the passing away of Shri Bijayananda Patnaik, (21 April, 1997).

He was a socialist at heart and Acharya Narendra Dev, Jayaprakash Narayan and Minoo Masani were his role-models.

One with Prime Minister Chowdhary Charan Singh, he believed that the backbone of the country was a strong peasantry and wanted modernization of agriculture. At the same time, the natural entrepreneur and founder of the Kalinga Airlines and Orissa Textile Mill as he was, he wanted agrarian feudalism to be dismantled and Industrial Revolution to take place. In the sixties, when he was Chief Minister of Orissa for the first time, along with Governor Ayodhyanath Khosla, he launched the "Decade of Destiny" and ushered in an era of industrialisation in the State. Later, in the nineties, again when he was Chief Minister of Orissa, industrialisation continued to be his obsession and, in keeping with the dynamic world and national economic scenario, wanted Public Sector Enterprises to gain strength through exposure to market forces.

He was nostalgic and ecstatic about the Oriya maritime traditions and the Paradip Port was in no small measure due to his initiatives.

Strongly believing in a lean and lively bureaucracy, he fearlessly advocated economy in expenditure as a steady style of governance rather than as an off-on formula of austerity to be applied during times of financial strain.

A true believer in the empowerment of women, he practised it by establishing one-third reservation for women not merely in local bodies, but in Government jobs.

The Kalinga Foundation and Prize set up by him is an ever-lasting testimony of his ideal of modernisation of society through dissemination of science.

Biju Patnaik had a colourful political career. Starting off as a member of the Royal Air Force, he romanced between aviation, entrepreneurship and politics and settled down for a political life which lasted for four decades. With his heart in Orissa and mind in New Delhi, he share his public life between the State and the Centre.

He was a member of the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Lok Sabhas representing Kendrapara parliamentary constituency during 1977-79, 1980-84 and 1984-85. He represented the Aska constituency in the Eleventh Lok Sabha. He was Union Minister of Steel, Mines and Coal during 1977-80. He had been a member of the Rajya Sabha in 1971. He had also been a member of the Orissa Legislative Assembly for seven terms and was Chief Minister of the State during 1961-63 and 1992-96. During 1996-97, he was Chairman of the Standing Committee of Finance in the Parliament.

Shri Biju Patnaik passed away on 17 April, 1997 in New Delhi at the age of 81 after a brief illness.

We deeply mourn the loss of this great son of our country and, I am sure, the House will join me in conveying our condolence to the bereaved family.

## ACHYUTHA MENON—IN THE MOULD OF A PHILOSOPHER KING\*

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I feel greatly honoured that I have been invited to participate in this Achyutha Menon Memorial meeting.

Yesterday, the 2nd of October 1996, I participated in the Gandhi Jayanthi ceremony in the Central Hall of the Parliament in New Delhi. Being amidst you today in this Achyutha Menon Memorial Meeting, I am reminded of Mahatma Gandhi again. The reason is simple. Shri Achyutha Menon, like the Father of the Nation, was part of our Independence Movement. He participated in the Quit India Movement in 1942 and underwent jail sentence. He was thus baptised as a freedom fighter.

He was a true Gandhian. Recalling Gandhiji's attire without a shirt, even when he went to the Buckingham Palace, Shri Achyutha Menon wrote that it was the Mahatma's way of identifying himself with the poor of our country. He stated "In my humble view, there are many things to learn from Gandhiji, even by those who consider themselves to be staunch Marxist-Leninists".

I was going through Achyutha Menon's essay on "Ideal of Austere Living". I could not but be amazed at his stunning objectivity reflected in this essay. Even as he observed about the desertion of Gandhian ideals by Congressmen, he strongly deprecated recourse to affluence by his own communist comrades, who deviated from their identification with the poor masses of the country gained during their 'underground' days.

Shri Menon was an undoubted nationalist. He called upon his colleagues in his party to draw inspiration and lessons, not merely from Karl Marx, but from Gandhiji, Jayaprakash, Acharya Narendra Dev, Dr. Ambedkar, Lohia and others. Displaying intellectual integrity characteristic of him, and strongly discouraging conformism to intellectual regimentation by external forces, he lamented, "Our greatest weakness is abject servitude in thinking or the absence of original thinking".

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\*At the Achyutha Menon Memorial Meeting organised by the Achyutha Menon Foundation, Thiruvananthapuram, (3 October, 1996).

When the Indian Constitution was framed and established, Shri Achyutha Menon exhorted that the Communist Party of India should work within the framework of the Constitution and called upon his party to participate in the elections.

He was at the helm of affairs as Chief Minister of Kerala and guided the destinies of the people of this marvellous State from 1969 to 1977. This period was, for the Keralites, something in the nature of the golden period of Mahabali, the legendary ruler of Kerala, who ushered in an era of prosperity, equity and social justice. Shri Menon set a personal example of probity in public life; he rose far above political considerations and proved himself to be rare statesman amongst Indian politicians.

These are days of multi-party Coalition Governments. His tenure as Chief Minister of Kerala nearly three decades back has given us a model of political stability through governance by coalition.

Today, at the international level, debates are going on in respect of Food Security, Health for All, Education for All, Housing for All, etc. Twenty-five years back, being concerned about these basic needs of the people, he suggested a formula, it was 'Science and Technology in the service of the Common Man'. He was immensely aware that science and technology confined to the governmental systems were constricted and unproductive. He wanted the best of scientific talents in the country to be pressed into service so that research and development would be productive. He urged for creation of Centres of Excellence and their networking at the national level. In Kerala itself, he created a number of autonomous science and technology institutions. He wanted these institutions to provide for the basic needs of the people.

Shri Achyutha Menon believed that the welfare of mankind could be brought about only by a meaningful synergy between innovative scientists, informed politicians and experienced administrators.

The International Labour Organisation, which lays down norms for labour protection for the working people, stipulates full, freely chosen and productive employment. Ours is a country of acute unemployment and under-employment. The people of Kerala are specially disadvantaged because they suffer unemployment despite education. Shri Menon, even as he strived for enhancing employment, and even as he wanted employment to be freely chosen in the sense that it would not be exploitative, wanted employment and labour to be productive in the true sense of ILO's prescription. He believed that the working class should conduct its struggles against exploitation by undergoing sacrifices and not by recourse to measures such as demand for

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'strike period wages'. He has gone down in the annals of our country as a unique leader of the working people who established the principle 'no work, no pay'. This principle has come to be adopted as a rule of practice all over India.

In 1977, after laying down the Office of Chief Minister, Kerala, he decided to retire from active politics. He believed in the capability of the rising generations and the youth. Receding back into his native town of Trichur, he engaged himself in writing about his views and experiences with a rare command over very simple but forceful Malayalam and English. Limitedly, he also spent time in facilitating provision of shelter for the poor through the all India famous institution called COSTFORD.

Indeed, Shri Achyutha Menon was a man in the mould of Plato's philosopher king. They do not make politicians of the type of Achyutha Menon any longer.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## BIPIN CHANDRA PAL— A MULTI-FACETED CRUSADER\*

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I feel honoured to have been invited to inaugurate the Bipin Chandra Pal Memorial Bhawan.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that this Bhawan, commemorating Late Shri Bipin Chandra Pal, one of the greatest leaders of our freedom struggle, should coincide with the fiftieth year of our Independence.

As I understand, the Trust is going to establish and maintain a library-cum-study and research centre to work on the history of India's freedom movement, with special emphasis on the contributions of Bipin Chandra Pal to the political, social and economic life of our people, apart from running a medical-cum-diagnostic centre to provide access to health care for the poor. This is, indeed, a very enlightened vision.

Like never before, we need to re-dedicate ourselves to the ideals of the first generation leaders of Independent India. Even as I was going through the letter of the Chairperson Bithika Dev, I was struck by the slogan on her letterhead which I quote:

“We desire, everyone of us, to whatever school of political and religious thought we may belong — to build up a powerful Indian nation...

This is our National Programme, all else are parochial and provincial...”

The slogan at once projects the ideals of political tolerance, secularism, national integration and denouncement of parochialism and provincialism. These ideals are of eternal value in our multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation.

Bipin Chandra Pal combined in himself the best of the experience he gained in several roles — as a school teacher, journalist, a trade unionist (as a champion of Assam tea garden workers), a theologian and a freedom fighter. Every role he played and every phase of his life truly deserve to be researched and his personality projected down the generations.

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\*At the inaugural of the Bipin Chandra Pal Memorial Bhawan, New Delhi, (16 March, 1997).

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He was the architect of the concept of national education — a system of education which was to combine learning of liberal and scientific culture with technical education. The liberal branch of education was to provide for teaching of language, history, philosophy and arts; yet another branch was to provide for teaching of pure science; and one more branch was to concentrate on higher technical studies. This concept of national education is relevant even today. Bipin Chandra devised this concept as a modality of securing all-round human resource development and as a technique of providing education for all — each according to one's faculty and aptitude and each according to one's means. I am sure that the Memorial Trust will specially concentrate on this concept of national education which is ever relevant.

I always take pride in identifying myself with the lofty nationalistic ideals of East India. Both because of this and because of my collegiate days in Calcutta, I always have an involuntary and subconscious urge to go to Calcutta and other parts of West Bengal. When I am hard pressed for time to go over there, I would have no hesitation in coming to Chittaranjan Park as many times as needed. I am sure that on account of the Bipin Chandra Pal Memorial Trust and its sustained activities in the cause of the nation, in the cause of the poor and in the cause of the cultural excellence of East India which is part of the composite culture of India, I would have many more opportunities to visit Chittaranjan Park and the Trust.

I compliment Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev who is acknowledged by the Bipin Chandra Pal Memorial Trust as the moving spirit behind the Memorial Bhawan and the ventures of the Trust.

With these words, I have great pleasure in formally inaugurating the Bipin Chandra Pal Memorial Bhawan Complex and in unveiling the statue of Bipin Chandra Pal.

Thank you.

## KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM—A MANY SPLENDOURED PERSONALITY\*

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It is a matter of immense pleasure for me to be amidst you today to pay respectful homage to the memory of Kazi Nazrul Islam who was a literary institution by his own right in the early part of this century. It is indeed thoughtful of *Agnivina* to have arranged the pre-birth centenary celebrations of the eminent poet.

Kazi Nazrul Islam was born in poverty at Churulia, District Burdwan in undivided Bengal in 1899. He had education in a traditional *Maktab*. It is his impressionable years which made him what he turned out to be later — a man of incredible catholicity. In these years, he not only learnt simple Persian and Arabic but was exposed to the Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, apart from folks and lores.

Nazrul was born and grew up in the environment of India's renaissance. The socio-political situation in the country during those days was in ferment. The Indian National Congress had been established; Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anand Math* and the soul-stirring composition *Vande Mataram* had ignited people's urge for freedom; Raja Rammohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda had created a broader social perspective which quickened the minds of the people to a heightened awareness of their national existence.

Nazrul lived through hard days working as a domestic servant, a baking apprentice, etc. He had his secondary education as a free student in Maimansingh District, thanks to the mercies of a Police Officer who spotted his intelligence. Even when he was just eighteen, having continued secondary education in Districts Asansol and Burdwan as well, he acquired military training. He was enlisted to the 49th Bengal Regiment and served in the North-West Frontier from 1917 to 1919. While in military service, he

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\*At the function organised by the *Agnivina* to celebrate the Pre-birth Centenary of Kazi Nazrul Islam, Calcutta, (27 May, 1997).

wrote prose and poetry. He wrote short stories too. During his military days, he developed a great passion for the freedom of the country. The regiment in which he served was disbanded in 1920 and thereafter he became a litterateur in the cause of freedom struggle and the downtrodden. He left behind him a rich legacy of his creative genius as though in a hurry before fate, in 1942, forced him to prematurely and tragically retire into the deeper recesses of his mind in a reaction against the disease that began corroding his brain at the prime age of forty-two.

Nazrul was a many-splendoured personality. Apart from being a poet and a musician, he was a freedom fighter, a nationalist, a journalist, a socialist, a secularist and a champion of the cause of women. In contemporary Bengali life and literature, he is considered as the second poet in the era of Rabindranath Tagore. He never had any intellectual pretensions. He emoted from his natural instincts. His poetry and writings were ruled by his warm heart and not by mere cold reason. That is how he became the people's poet. If his imagination was unaffected and if his inventiveness, rhetoric, wit and fancy had an unbridled ride much beyond the dictates of art, it was only for the reason that his canvas was the immediate human situation and environment. He was a raw humanist; admired what was tender and beautiful in human nature; and stood for universal brotherhood. His diction and style were strongly impacted by a fusion of Persian-Arabic and Sanskrit-Bengali vocabulary.

Nazrul's contribution to *Bangla Gan* was truly significant. Drawing deeply from Bengali folk traditions rich in storyline, musical notes and popular appeal, he contributed several musical compositions covering several themes — national independence, love, nature, spiritualism, etc. His special contribution to Bengali music was the *Gazal*. It is gathered that he contributed as many as 3,500 compositions though a large number of them are not traceable. He received training under Ustad Ziauddin Khan. His Master's Voice (HMV) found Nazrul's compositions a great commercial success as well. K.S. Dev Burman, Dilip Kumar Roy, Abbasuddin, Supraba Sarkar and Feroza Begum were some of the eminent personalities who exposed the larger public to Nazrul's music.

As a participant in the country's freedom struggle, he threw his lot with Bengali stalwarts like C.R. Das. The *Banglar Katha* was one of his remarkable contributions to the national movement. He became the *Bidrohi Kavi* or rebel poet. The *Bidrohi* he wrote was not a mere piece of poetry. It was an episode in Bengal's participation in the national freedom movement. He suffered imprisonment as a seditionist.

As a journalist, he was known for his political weekly *Dhumketu* published in 1922. The journal stood for termination of British rule and complete independence of the country. Even prior to *Dhumketu*, in the company of the veteran leftist Muzaffar Ahmad, he had launched a daily, *The Navvyug*.

The Soviet socialist system of governance immensely attracted Nazrul. He closely associated himself with Hemanta Kumar Sarkar in founding the Labour Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress in 1925. He churned out poetry honouring the proletariat. He was a friend of the peasantry in particular and was associated with events leading to the Bengal Peasants' and Workers' Party.

He was a true secularist. He took a Hindu for his wife though much to the resentment of the orthodox Hindus and Muslims of the day. He believed in Hindu-Muslim unity.

He was also part of the national movement for emancipation of women. For him, women symbolised creation, love and affection, sacrifice and tolerance and wanted them to be rid of the fetters clamped on them by the society.

This is the year of the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. In offering our salutations to the memory of Nazrul today, we are enriching our Jubilee celebrations. Thank you for inviting me to join you today; thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## SANT KABIR—A GREAT SOCIAL REFORMER\*

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I am happy and honoured to be associated with this function to lay the foundation for Kabir Bhawan.

The proposed creation of the Kabir Bhawan is not to be seen as just an addition of yet another structure to the stock of institutional buildings of Delhi. It should be seen rather as the nucleus of a movement—a movement to re-establish our values which are facing a serious crisis of erosion.

During the medieval times in India, more specifically during the 15th century, after the weakening of the Delhi Sultanate, a movement of religious tolerance originated. This was also marked by Hindu-Muslim camaraderie. There was a social ferment out of which emerged some of the great reformers of the country. Kabir, a Muslim weaver of Varanasi, was one such reformer. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Discovery of India*, has described the developments and ethos of the times, and I quote:

The influence of these reformers went far beyond the limits of the particular sects that grew up after them. Hinduism as a whole felt the impact of the new ideas, and Islam in India also became somewhat different from what it was elsewhere. The fierce monotheism of Islam influenced Hinduism, and the vague pantheistic attitude of the Hindu had its effect on the Indian Muslim....Muslim mysticism and Sufism which probably had had its beginnings in neo-Platonism grew. (unquote)

The thoughts of Kabir were rational. He was a rationalist. He rejected the caste system. For him, religion was a manifestation of the human being's search within the self. He called for exaltation of human conduct to a plane far higher than man-made deceitful dogmas and prejudices. This new trend, the "ferment" as Nehruji called it, came to be known as the Bhakti Movement.

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\*At the foundation laying ceremony for Kabir Bhawan, New Delhi, (16 January, 1998).

Sadly, it is the value of social and religious tolerance that has been rudely disrupted today. Negating the essence of the Bhakti Movement and all the efforts at social emancipation that followed over five centuries, the caste system is getting perpetuated today due to economic and political slogans. Indeed, caste system seems even to have replaced religion altogether, and emerged as the most potent divisive force in the country.

In the process of degradation of religion, rituals seem to have overtaken ethics and morals. Because of this, there is a patent disharmony between religious and practical life. People profess faith but their conduct seriously detracts from the teachings of their faith. Ritualisation is not consistent with scientific temper. We are living in an age of science and technology, of reason and enlightenment. We cannot be ritualistic and still claim scientific temper unless we are hypocrites. Nor is religion and science inconsistent with each other. Rather, religion is but a scientific manifestation of codes of ethics. Kabir did find religion and ethics as two sides of the same coin.

Yet another great aspect of Kabir's rationalism was his identification of the human being with the environment, with the universe. It is this identification of the human being with the environment and the universe which has been reflected long later in C. Rajagopalachari's work entitled *Hinduism, Doctrine and Way of Life* where he has quoted a Tamil poet which I shall re-quote:

"The crow and the sparrow are my kin,  
The wide seas and hills are my clan,  
Whatever I see, wherever my eyes turn,  
I see my own flesh and blood,  
I see myself in every being around,  
On this boundless joy". (unquote)

It is the lack of identity with our environment which includes our fellow beings that results in exploitation and violence. When I addressed the Lok Sabha in its Special Golden Jubilee Session in August-September, 1997, it is the violence that we see all around us that I have strongly deprecated. If we cherish the values of Kabir, we will cease to be violent and our society will be an edifice of peace.

I find from the background papers that I have received from the Shri Sadguru Kabir Mandir Society that the Kabir Bhawan for which the foundation stone is being laid today is not merely going to be a place for meditation but is going to house a library and resource centre and a museum depicting Kabir's life. I also gather that several voluntary

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organisations would be supported for strengthening the forces of harmony, peace and unity. I am confident that the Kabir Bhawan getting erected during this Sixth Birth Centenary year of Kabir will blossom into a centre of excellence on Kabir's philosophy and teachings. Let me now conclude by praying to God that true to Kabir's teachings, the people of India will perceive realities beyond appearances, move away from darkness into light, and strive for immortality beyond death through their virtuous actions.

Thank you one and all.

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INTER-PARLIAMENTARY  
COOPERATION—NEW VISTAS

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## INDIA AND THE IPU—STRENGTHENING THE FORCES OF DEMOCRACY\*

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Thank you for inviting me to hear me on my candidature for election to the office of the IPU President.

About the Justification for my aspiration to be the President of the IPU Council, I have placed before you my candidature brochure which details my long experience as a parliamentarian and as a concurrent holder of several Government portfolios. I don't think it will be elegant on my part, on this occasion, to indulge in a further autobiographical exercise. In any case, I am sure that you would have made a fair assessment about my credentials.

My country, India, in terms of her Constitution, laws and practices on ground, symbolises all the IPU values—democracy, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, equity and social justice and parliamentary cooperation. We have been in the IPU since 1948. We pay our contribution to the IPU ungrudgingly and with promptitude. We have been active partners in the IPU programmes. We consider that the IPU is more relevant in the world today than ever before. We are for strengthening it.

We have practised democracy in a vastly pluralistic society of about a billion people, constituting sixteen per cent of the world population and of half-a-billion voters. We have practised it for fifty years successfully and without interruption. We have been receiving Golden Jubilee felicitations on the success of our democracy from Heads of State and Heads of Government from all over the world. Consistent with this universal approbation for India, you may like even now to consider that unanimously electing me, the Speaker of the popular Chamber of India in this Golden Jubilee Year of our Independence and democracy, is the best message and signal that you can give the world in strengthening the forces of democracy.

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\*At the Twelve Plus Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), at the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Cairo, (13 September, 1997).

The basic theme of the World Summit for Social Development organised by the United Nations as part of its Golden Jubilee celebrations was societal integration. A message given to the world by this Summit at its conclusion was the termination of social and political exclusion. But the fact of IPU life and times is that Groups other than the Twelve Plus have been subjected to gross political exclusion. Through 21 elections, Twelve Plus occupied the Presidency of the IPU Council 14 times, Africa 4 times, Latin America twice and Asia-Pacific only once. India occupied the Presidency once twenty-four years back. As on date, the 22 countries in the Asia-Pacific Group constitute over 3 billion out of 5.7 billion, that is, about 55 per cent of the world population. Hon'ble Parliamentarians of the Twelve Plus, I would submit to you with all the sincerity and humility at my command, that you should search your souls, search your conscience and ask yourself what equity is there in politically excluding more than half of humanity for so long and with such obsessive repetition, by denying the IPU Presidency to its representatives. Christians amongst us go for "confession" to seek divine reparation for our personal failures. Let me humbly seek reparation from you for having practised this political exclusion for so very long.

We, in India, do attach great sanctity to the basic IPU values I mentioned earlier. Democracy, amongst these values, in essence, is a matter of sharing opportunities. We also do acknowledge, without reservation, that European political philosophers and thinkers were the fountainheads of these values. Indeed, the thoughts of these philosophers and thinkers constitute an essential part of the curriculum of political science courses in our colleges and universities. John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Montesque, Voltaire and Rousseau are household names in our seats of learning. I hope that you may not feel outraged if I beseech that you may be pleased to fairly practise their values, having taught us the same.

The Twelve Plus candidate, Hon'ble Mr. Martinez, is indeed a worthy person. I have called on him and made friends with him. Spaniards and Indians are historically good friends. In any case, the Spaniards did not colonize India. I am sure, after this presentation of mine, he may even urge you to make me the Twelve Plus candidate!

I shall now conclude. As I suggested earlier, search your souls and conscience. Name me as your consensus candidate as well. Give me your conscience votes. Return me to the Office of the IPU President. You would have granted reparation for the past loss of opportunities for the Asia-Pacific region, for India. You would have honoured the admittedly world's largest and successful democracy in its Golden Jubilee Year. You would have strengthened the forces of democracy.

Thank you for your kind attention.

## INDIA IN THE IPU—A LEADERSHIP ROLE\*

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I deem it a privilege and an honour to present my candidature for election as President of the IPU Council.

India is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracy. The composite culture of India reflects a synthesis of world cultures which has evolved over centuries through a two-way process of interaction with the rest of the world. India, therefore, is a deserving candidate for a leadership role in the IPU.

She symbolises IPU values by example. As a founder and active member of the United Nations, India has stood for international peace and security; she has also ratified many international conventions, including those relating to human rights. As a founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement and one committed to its goals, India has contributed greatly to keeping the world safe for peace. Having integrated the nation out of about 300 principalities, India has run it successfully as a continent size democracy without interruption for 50 years, maintaining unity and integrity in the midst of societal diversities. India has made lasting contribution to the mobilisation of world opinion for the empowerment of women by playing an active role through four World Women's Conferences and by taking several measures through national action, especially in pursuance of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Above all else, India has been an active and exemplary member of this Inter-Parliamentary Union; next year will be the Golden Jubilee of our membership in this organisation.

Having submitted before you the credentials of India as a practitioner of IPU values and objectives, I may be permitted to present to you a very crucial aspect of elections to the IPU Presidency. The Asia-Pacific has been denied a leadership role in the IPU for far too long. This is unfair and unjust. I shall only invoke your conscience and appeal to you to rectify this imbalance by supporting India's candidature now.

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\*At the Plenary of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, Cairo, (16 September, 1997).

The high constitutional status of Speakers of popular Chambers of the world Parliaments lends stature, strength and dignity to the Office of the IPU Council President. Indeed, Speakers have occupied the Presidency with greater impact.

The IPU Presidency, as envisaged now, is an exalted Office from where what is expected to emanate is leadership and policy. And, the Executive Committee and the Secretary-General are to take care of the execution of such policies. This arrangement is as it should be. We can ill-afford to reduce the stature of the Presidency by turning it into an executive office.

The IPU President should draw his clout and strength by skilfully harmonising the interests and concerns of national Parliaments rather than by attempting to transmit authority from the top.

The gravest dangers for democracy in today's world are poverty and deprivation. It is only by removal of these dangers that the world can be made safe for democracy. And, one important way in which the IPU can promote democracy is by promoting the agenda for development. Creating awareness and capacities for prudent management of national economies and reinstating the primacy of international development assistance, with priority for the poorest of the poor nations, especially the least developed nations, should be items indispensable and high on the IPU agenda. I intend to devote special attention to women's issues.

The IPU faces serious financial challenges. Mobilisation of membership contributions, especially of arrears, through pragmatic methods, prudent management of internal liquidity surpluses, effecting internal economies in expenditure and mobilisation of external funding through agencies like the UNDP are some of the specific measures which I would pursue to meet the resource crunch.

Honourable parliamentarians, I believe that with my diversified experience of about two decades without interruptions as parliamentarian and concurrently as a holder of several senior portfolios in the Government of India, I will be in a position to bring a breath of fresh air to the IPU in the service to humanity. A vote for me is vote for India, a vote for democracy, a vote for parliamentary cooperation.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND THE IPU—PROMOTING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN POLITICS\*

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I feel honoured by your invitation to hear me.

Standing before you, having offered my candidature for election as President of the IPU Council, I feel as if I am participating in the ancient Indian royal ceremony of *Swayamvar* in which the Princess would be asked to choose her life partner herself from amongst suitors assembled by public notice given in advance. Suitors used to be from royal families. Sometimes, commoners also dared. Now I have also dared — a commoner from the Asia-Pacific, from India, from a small tribal community.

Why have I dared? Because I have been encouraged by my own experience of having been elected as Presiding Officer of the House of the People of the world's largest successful democracy of 50 years' vintage, of nearly a billion people, of half a billion voters.

I have already presented, in my candidature brochure brought out by the Indian Parliamentary Group, my credentials — as a parliamentarian of standing of two decades and as a concurrent holder of several ministerial positions in the Government of India and in my own State. I see that the IPU Secretariat also has circulated a paper on my candidature. I won't go into the brochure details.

My societal background is that of a person hailing from a matriarchal community. So, empowerment of women is not a modern concept for me. It is an imbibed societal value, a subconscious urge, a style of thinking and action. This is the reason why I could persuade the Parliament of India to host, in February 1997, the Specialised Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Partnership between Men and Women in Politics in which I even called for a Heads of Government Summit to promote this partnership as a further step towards elimination of the unconscionable democratic deficit currently prevailing.

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\*At the meeting of the Women Parliamentarians at the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Cairo, (10 September, 1997).

My academic background is that of a student and practitioner of law. By faith, I am a Christian. So, I am a humanitarian with strong belief in peace, tolerance, compassion, natural justice, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

My political background is that of a pragmatist. Consistent with the teaching of the Father of my Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, I believe that Mother Earth has enough to give for everybody's need but not everybody's greed. Incomes should be earned and wealth generated and shared with equity and social justice.

Every aspect of my background, I feel, is consistent with the basic values of IPU. And, IPU is a natural forum in which I believe I can make significant contribution in all the areas of its competence and for the promotion of all its objectives, especially for strengthening democracy which, as reflected in the IPU's study of Men and Women in Politics, is "still in the making". For the purpose, no doubt I shall be drawing upon my long and diversified experience — particularly at a crucial stage when human kind is transiting into the next millennium.

Reverting to my earlier reference to the old Indian royal ceremony of the bride's choice of her suitor, I may inform you that very often it was indeed the commoner who was the bride's choice. And, the commoner that I am, I hope I would be your choice too.

Thank you for your kind attention.

## INDO-AFRICAN SOLIDARITY AND THE IPU\*

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I consider meeting all of you to personally present my candidature for election as President of the IPU as a matter of immense pleasure and honour to me.

India's solidarity with Africa is an article of faith of our foreign policy. Mahatma Gandhi has left behind a deep emotional and political legacy of India's commitment to a profound friendship with African countries. Whether it was decolonisation or the struggle against apartheid, India has been relentlessly in the forefront. African countries helped found the Non-Aligned Movement and today many are pillars of the Movement. The Commonwealth provides another forum for continuing dialogue with our African brothers.

In the post-Cold War scenario, the danger that Africa's interests may be ignored has been real. Efforts to dilute the UN's development agenda threaten all of us and Africa in particular. India has consistently supported the continent's development agenda. The lead taken by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to set up the AFRICA Fund was part of India's commitment to this agenda.

India and African countries have bilaterally cooperated to build up valuable links in trade and commerce, industrialisation, infrastructure development, technology transfer, and educational and cultural exchanges. Our sincere commitment as partner developing country to Africa's development has always been the underlying motivation for Indo-African solidarity. This commitment remains.

Our relationship in the IPU has to be seen in this broad perspective. Developing countries have been denied access to a leadership role in the IPU for far too long. IPU presidential elections have repeatedly been unequal exercises between the rich and strong countries on the one hand

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\*At the African Group of the IPU at the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Cairo, (14 September, 1997).

and the poor and weak countries on the other. Through 21 elections to the IPU Presidency, Africa, including the Arab Group, could gain access to the Presidency only four times and the Asia-Pacific Group only once. This is unfair and iniquitous. Rotation is necessary and arguments that rotation can undermine merit are specious, insulting and arrogant. Our solidarity is in our unity and we can demonstrate we are strong if inroads are not permitted to be made into our solidarity.

I have attempted to present you my background and experience as a parliamentarian, as a Minister and a political leader in my candidature brochure. As you would be aware, I have also attempted over the last couple of months to reach the Speakers and IPU Council members in your countries through India's Ambassadors and High Commissioners, through direct contacts at Benin last month and now directly in Cairo over the last few days. I have no doubt that you would have made a very fair assessment of my credentials already.

Let the present election to the IPU Presidency be the starting point of an assertion by us of our collective strength and rights. From now on, let us ensure there is fair and equitable rotation of the Presidency among the different groups.

India's track-record in conforming to the IPU principles and values and India's status as an open society and a successful practioner of democracy are well known.

Let me conclude by appealing to you in the name of Indo-African solidarity to vote me as President of the IPU Council in this Golden Jubilee Year of India's Independence and democracy.

Thank you.

## CONCEPT OF A SAARC PARLIAMENT— INSTITUTIONALISING REGIONAL COOPERATION\*

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I am happy to be here this evening amidst this distinguished gathering. We are here to deliberate upon a topic so important in the context of regional cooperation, *i.e.* the concept of a South Asian Regional Legislature. The topic is of great interest to me both as a parliamentarian and the Presiding Officer of the Parliament of the largest democracy in the world. I congratulate the organisers of this discussion for choosing this topic. It has great relevance to peace, stability and prosperity of our region.

It was over a decade ago that SAARC was established. The objectives of the Association, as spelt out in its Charter, are economic, social and cultural development of the peoples of South Asia, building up their collective self-reliance and cooperation at international and regional levels.

There are several factors which should justify action towards establishment of a SAARC Parliament.

The SAARC countries have come to have significant experience with parliamentary democracy, some of them commencing from the British colonial days, about the middle of the 19th century. The parliamentary experience of SAARC countries today reflects a mix of several features:

- Popular sovereignty.
- Universal suffrage.
- Federalism, as in the case of India and Pakistan.
- Unicameralism as well as bicameralism (examples being Sri Lanka for unicameralism and India, Pakistan and Nepal for bicameralism).
- Westminster model of constitutional monarchy like Nepal and Bhutan.

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\*At the discussion on "Concept of a SAARC Parliament", New Delhi, (23rd July, 1996).

- The Presidential model like in Sri Lanka.
- Multi-party system.
- Separation of powers — as between the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary (in Maldives, separation is not complete).

This rich experience is a good foundation for building up a regional Parliament.

People, the world over, have been passing through various processes of economic integration, *i.e.* through creation of free trade areas, customs unions, common markets, economic unions, etc. The scramble for markets of late has, indeed, spawned several regional integration efforts — the European Union, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum). There have been regional integration efforts in Latin America (MERCOSUR, for example) and Africa also (COMESA — Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa). The latest in the series of integration efforts is, course, the agreement to have by the year 2005 A.D. the Free Trade Association of the Americas. This kind of economic integration with which SAARC has made a beginning could lead to meaningful political integration.

The developed economies, having saturated their traditional markets for trade in products, services and investments, are looking forward to new markets for maximising returns from trade and investments. The SAARC countries, offering as they do, a market of 1380 million people constitute an attractive market for them. As of now, SAARC countries run parallel economies, more often competitively undercutting one another and, in effect, losing out to the developed countries in the process of economic globalisation. There is, like never before, ever increasing necessity for economic and political integration and cohesion amongst them to meet the challenge of globalisation.

The problems of SAARC countries are common — slow demographic transition, high levels of illiteracy, unemployment and under-employment, poverty, high dependence on agriculture, inadequate access to modern technology and financial resources, inadequate infrastructure and colossal demand for minimum needs. We have tried to tackle these problems consistent with our local genius and social and cultural milieu. In the process, we are replicating our efforts without maximising the utilisation of the institutional infrastructure regionally available. This results in avoidable waste of resources.

Increasingly, basic issues such as human rights, empowerment of women, environment protection and protection of children are receiving

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priority attention in various international forums, including multilateral bodies. In the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural environment and the diverse agro-climatic conditions in which the peoples of the SAARC countries live, these issues have various dimensions to deal with which we need to come together in cohesive solidarity. We need to collectively and proactively find our own solutions to these basic issues, interested in them as we are for our own sake, lest we are seen only as peoples reacting to pressures from the developed part of the world.

SAARC countries are also members of the Non-Aligned Movement. They, along with other Non-Aligned countries, take common positions on issues of international importance in various international fora. More importantly, the principles on which Non-Alignment is based reflect a certain ideological convergence amongst countries concerned which could be channelised effectively for beneficial regional integration.

The only example of a multinational Parliament we have before us is the European Parliament. In the context of discussing the concept of a SAARC Parliament, it would be worthwhile having an idea of how the European Parliament functions. There is a European Council at which the Heads of State and Government of the European Community meet once in six months. They discuss issues of common concern and outstanding issues which their Ministers are not in a position to resolve in the Council of Ministers.

The Council of Ministers brings together Ministers of member-States who are responsible for different areas of policy like agriculture, budget, and so on. They meet thrice a year. The Council is the final authority to adopt legislative enactments and amendments.

The European Parliament is elected by universal suffrage. The elected Parliament has over 500 members.

The European Commission consists of Commissioners nominated by member-States. The Commission is the Community Executive. The Commission functions through a number of Directorates-General, each dealing with certain Community activities. It has the sole right of initiative to make legislative proposals. It has also got the right of implementation of approved proposals.

The Court of Justice interprets the Community Law. Questions of interpretation could be raised by individuals or firms or member-States against the Community institutions.

There are other Community bodies — the Court of Auditors which is the financial watchdog; the Economic and Social Committee functioning

as an advisory body and bringing together organisations of the employers and the employees, the consumer groups, etc.; and the European Investment Bank which acts as a borrower and lender for projects of Community interest both inside and outside Europe. It is exempt from the Parliament's scrutiny.

As already stated, the SAARC effort has been of comparatively recent origin. It functions through a Council of Ministers consisting of the Foreign Ministers of the member-States, a Standing Committee of Foreign Secretaries, Technical Committees and Action Committees and has a Secretariat. The Heads of State or Government of the member-States meet once in a year and the Council of Ministers twice in a year.

In pursuance of the SAARC Charter, the Speakers and members of Parliament of the member-countries gave themselves, in 1992, another Charter of Association. The mandate they have given themselves is promotion of people-to-people contact and exchange of parliamentary experience.

In 1993, the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) was established, the objective being promotion and sustenance of mutual trade and economic cooperation through exchange of concessions.

In 1994, the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established at the business and industry level.

The SAARC has an Integrated Programme of Action (IPA). It has deliberated upon subjects such as terrorism, drug trafficking and abuse, development of women, exchange of technology and goods and services, optimum utilisation of human and natural resources, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, food security, tourism promotion, etc. Seminars and Workshops have been held for the purpose of guiding cooperation in all these areas. It has also been resolved to establish a South Asian Development Fund.

While these developments have taken place, there is also another opinion that SAARC is becoming an empty forum. Critics of SAARC tend to believe that very little palpable progress in real multilateral cooperation has taken place.

While SAARC countries have made some efforts at regional cooperation and while there are factors which could promote integration efforts, how feasible or practicable is the establishment of a SAARC Parliament? There are indeed problems.

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Basically, the problem is one of will, of SAARC countries to integrate politically. South Asia, as a geo-political entity, is an Indo-centric region. India accounts for 72 per cent of the area, 77 per cent of the population, 76 per cent of the GDP and 79 per cent of manufactured value addition of the region. In view of these realities, India is likely to be seen as distorting the symmetry of power structure of South Asia.

Involvement of external powers in the region compounds the situation further by influencing threat perceptions, though India's track-record is one of immense restraint.

Traditional rivalries and disputes have come to be chronic factors which deeply impact on bilateral relations as between certain SAARC countries which could militate against multilateral political integration.

Creation of a SAARC Parliament would mean collective efforts at a very mature reconciliation of the sovereign rights of member-States with the supranational authority of this Parliament. This kind of a reconciliation has not been very easy to come by even in the process of establishment of the European Parliament. Imbalance continues to exist in a significant way in the triangular relationship between the Commission, Council of Ministers and the Parliament. It should not also be forgotten that the European Parliament and the other Community institutions have evolved over a period of more than four decades. They originated through a progressive merger of the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). Basically, then, the driving force of the European Community institutions has been the urge for bringing about a close union amongst the peoples of Europe.

Despite the problems we have, we should continue to make sustained efforts in building upon SAARC institutions and experiment, and work hard with a long-term perspective even if it be of another fifty years. Meaningful economic integration leading to political integration in the form of a supranational Legislature on the model of the European Parliament is worth the price to be paid for peace, stability and prosperity of our region.

Thank you.

## SAARC AND REGIONAL SOLIDARITY\*

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We have had three very fruitful days of this Conference. The deliberations were marked by great cordiality. On the subjects of the Conference, we shared valuable experience. The recommendations of the Conference reflect unanimity of thought on our basic problems and clarity on future goals.

We are geographically contiguous. We have had common historical past, not to speak of cultural commonalities. But today, despite our commonalities, total regional solidarity remains a problem for us. We can't afford to be divided by the same culture.

During the days of Cold War, super powers played their proxy games in every theatre of the world, including South Asia. Now the Cold War is behind us. But economics has become the instrument of power game. We have enough natural and human resources to bring about prosperity and peace on our own by collective action. We have to minimise our comparative disadvantages, maximise our comparative advantages by bringing about synergy between our complementarities and enhance our economic and political strength so that in the next millennium, we can hold our heads high and deal with the rest of the world in terms of equality.

Population is indeed the basic problem of our region, as has been reconfirmed in this Conference. If we solve this problem, we would have solved all others.

It is often stated that the SAARC has become a talking shop. I don't contribute to this view. Lot of meaningful initiatives have been taken in several areas. It is for us, the parliamentarians, to pursue these initiatives at the peoples' level in our respective countries and strengthen the

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\*At the Second Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, Islamabad, (28 October, 1997)

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institution of SAARC itself. The European Union of today is what it is, not because of any overnight magic but because of tenacious efforts of the European nations for decades. Let us continue our mission also with perseverance.

Let me again place on record our deep appreciation of the time given to us by His Excellency President Leghari for the inauguration of the Conference and for putting the Conference itself in its proper perspective. Let me also thank His Excellency Speaker Soomro for the delightful and relaxed manner in which he conducted the Conference and enabled us to arrive at meaningful recommendations. I thank too all the Speakers and Parliamentarians of the region, apart from the Officers of the various Parliament Secretariats who have worked behind the scene. The Secretary General of the National Assembly of Pakistan, Mr. Goraya, deserves our special compliments for his meticulous attention to details of organising this Conference and his charming ways.

I also have great pleasure in placing on record my deep appreciation of Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif for agreeing at short notice to meet the SAARC Speakers at 11 a.m. today. He has arrived in Islamabad from foreign tour only a short time back.

Let us look forward to meeting again in Bangladesh for our next Conference. Of course, in the meantime, I hope we would have taken a lot of follow-up action in terms of recommendations of this Conference. On a personal note, I may be permitted to say that I would miss the wonderful ambience of Islamabad as I leave this beautiful city.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND DPR KOREA— PARTNERS IN ASIAN RESURGENCE\*

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I am deeply honoured by the reception given to the Indian Parliamentary Delegation. Indeed, I am moved by the sincere Korean hospitality.

I was very touched by what I saw at the Native Home of your late Great Leader, Kim Il Sung at Mangyongdae. I was very struck by the similarity of farmers' life in India and DPRK as reflected in the Native Home. The plough, the spinning wheel, the loom, the mud pots, the cattle-shed — these are the relics kept in the Native Home of your late Great Leader and they are the symbols of lifeline of the peasantry in our two countries.

Your Great Leader went abroad early in life, came back home, lived intensively amongst the common people and brought Revolution. So did Mahatma Gandhi.

Browsing through your Constitution, I was struck by Article 63 according to which your motto is "One for All ; All for One". You have laid emphasis on national integration which is a great value by which people of any nation should live.

I gather, and see, that the strength of your country is your agriculture. A country with sound agricultural base will always progress with its head held high. Such a country can never be put down economically or in spirit.

Your literacy is near full. It is commendable.

Your contribution to Non-Alignment and peace has been significant. India as a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement deeply appreciates this.

Recently, you have had natural calamities — extensive floods. India has cooperated with you in this context, though in a symbolic way.

I see the future of your country in the sparkling eyes of your beautiful children.

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\*At the Banquet given by His Excellency, Mr. Yang Hyong Sop, Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mansudae Assembly, Pyongyang, (21 September, 1996).

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The twenty-first century belongs to us, the people of Asia. Let us, India and DPRK, participate in Asian resurgence.

Long live DPRK. Long live the people of DPRK. Long live Indo-Korean friendship and cooperation. I look forward to a Korean Parliamentary Delegation to India soon.

Now, let me propose a toast to the eternity of Great Leader His Excellency Late President Kim Il Sung; to the good health and long life of His Excellency Marshal Kim Jong Il; to the good health and long life of the President of the Republic of India, His Excellency Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma; to the good health and long life of Your Excellency Mr. Yang Hyong Sop, Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly of DPR Korea and all Korean friends present here.

## INDIA AND MAURITIUS — AN ETERNAL FRIENDSHIP\*

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I am immensely pleased to welcome you Mr. Speaker and your Delegation to New Delhi.

I am happy that you have responded favourably to our invitation and given us the privilege of hosting your Delegation. I am happy too, that you have had fairly elaborate visits to West and East India. When we in India and Mauritius exchange Delegations, it is an emotional experience. When we come to Mauritius, for us, it is like a reunion with long lost cousins. When you come to India, I am sure, it would be for you something like tracing your roots.

I notice, Sir Ramesh, that you have in your Delegation diversified talents — persons of eminence in different fields — law, governance, Civil Service, international affairs, agriculture, corporate management, labour, academics and local administration. These are all areas in which we in India also have considerable expertise. I am sure the visit of your Delegation would have been as much enriching for us as educative for you.

Mauritius represents, if I can put it like that, the composite culture of Asia, Africa and Europe. Our common heritage together with this composite culture augurs well for a significant expansion of our relations in all fields.

India and Mauritius are two vibrant democracies. We believe in world peace. We believe in an international order of economic equity and social justice.

Mauritius has achieved, over the last decade, an internationally acknowledged 'economic miracle'. We are also making serious efforts in establishing a liberal economy with equity for all. We have made some progress. We have a long way to go. But our goals are clear. We are forging

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Mauritian Parliamentary Delegation, led by His Excellency Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall, New Delhi, (21 November, 1996).

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alliances, particularly with traditionally friendly countries like Mauritius to expand trade and enhance investments. We offer, if I can claim, phenomenal and unprecedented opportunities for expansion of two-way trade and investments. We welcome, with gratitude, the efforts of the Government of Mauritius to attract Indian investments.

It is particularly heartening to us that Mauritius has national institutions in the areas of trade training, medical treatment and space technology named after our leaders of the older and younger generation, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi.

India and Mauritius have cooperated in launching the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation with involvement of the Government, the business and the academia. We in India hope that this cooperation would bloom into an exemplary effort at regional economic integration with mutual benefit for all. On behalf of the people, Parliament and Government of India, I have immense pleasure in complimenting Mauritius in its stewardship of the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that your current visit here would help in further deepening the understanding and friendship between our two countries and serve to extend and enrich cooperation in various fields. Let us strive together to bring about a World Order safer for democracy, diverse in culture, united in essence and peaceful in intentions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now invite you to join me in a toast to the health, happiness and well-being of His Excellency, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall and other distinguished members of the Mauritian Parliamentary Delegation and to the prosperity and well-being of our peoples.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND IRAN—HISTORIC TIES\*

Your Excellency, when you met me this morning in our Parliament House, the first observation you made was that India is the 'second home' for Iranians. My colleagues and I were deeply touched by this sentiment.

It is indeed a matter of great pleasure for me to extend a warm welcome to you and to the distinguished members of your Delegation. Your visit to India is taking place close on the heels of the visit of your Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati to India last month and the successful visit of our Vice-President H.E. Mr. K.R. Narayanan to your country.

I may recall here that we have had the privilege and honour of receiving and listening to His Excellency President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in the historic Central Hall of our Parliament House when he visited India in April last year. It is against this backdrop that your visit to our country is taking place and I am sure it will add a new dimension to our bilateral relations.

Iran has been a cradle of human civilization. Her contribution to the common heritage of mankind can hardly be over-emphasised. Excellency, your country has been responsible for many an illustrious chapter in the history of human endeavour in the fields of art, culture, music and poetry. For millions of Indians, Iran is not a strange land. The aroma of Iranian culture and civilization has since long permeated Indian literature and philosophy. No wonder, our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru aptly observed, and I quote : "Among the many nations and people that have come into contact with India and left their mark on her life and culture, the oldest and the most consistent are the Iranians."

The Persian scholars have played a pioneering role in preserving and propagating Indian culture. *Tarikh-al-Hind*, the monumental and classic work

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of His Excellency, Mr. Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, Speaker of Majlis of the Islamic Republic of Iran and his Parliamentary Delegation to India, New Delhi, (26 November, 1996).

on India and her rich cultural heritage was authored by the great Persian scholar and Indologist, Mohammad Al-Beruni. The philosophy embodied in significant Sanskrit works was propagated too by their translation into Persian. Indian wisdom and philosophy spread through Persia into the Western world.

The Indian scholars also played an important role in promoting Persian literature. Among the non-Iranians, the Indians have played the greatest and the most significant role in promoting the Persian literature. *Sabk-e-Hindi* (the Indian style) in Persian poetry and compilation of Persian grammar and tens of Persian lexicons are some of the gifts from India to Iranians.

Excellency, our relations with neighbours like Iran are of fundamental and continuing importance both due to historical reasons and contemporary political, strategic and economic considerations. We believe that strengthening of Indo-Iranian relations is important as well for ensuring regional development, peace and stability. Our two countries are opposed to outside interference in the internal affairs of any country. We are indeed deeply concerned over the situation in Afghanistan. We are committed to the unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. There can be no military solution to the Afghan issue. It is only through peaceful negotiations that the problem can be resolved. In this context, I deeply appreciate the suggestion made by you this morning that India and Iran could make joint efforts in facilitating establishment of peace in that country. We earnestly desire that peace would return to that country soon.

Our bilateral economic and commercial ties have been assiduously and consistently strengthened over years of cooperation. But, our bilateral trade would need to expand significantly. I see the recognition of this factor in the presence in your Delegation of your Ministers for Commerce and Industry, apart from the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce.

I have mentioned about regional development. Iran provides India the window to Central Asian Republics through the Iranian land route. In this context, I may refer to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Government of India, Iran and Turkmenistan. It provides for international carriage of goods by road and rail from Central Asian region to Iran and in transit through Iran to India. We hope an agreement will soon emerge. This will be a potent instrument for promotion of multilateral trade among the various countries of the region.

Excellency, India and Iran are today endowed with capabilities and potentials in the technological, scientific and industrial spheres. This holds out opportunities for us to have increased cooperation in these fields — in particular, the oil and natural gas sector, railways and agriculture. A number of agreements have been established too between our two countries to

concretise the potential to strengthen our relations. I hope, and I am sure, your present visit will contribute meaningfully towards realising these objectives.

Your Excellency, members of the Majlis of the Islamic Republic of Iran and distinguished guests, I wish you all a very fruitful and pleasant stay in Delhi and visits to Hyderabad and Bombay.

I shall now conclude by conveying the heartfelt greetings of the people, Parliament and Government of India to the people, Majlis and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND BANGLADESH— COOPERATIVE RELATIONS\*

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Today marks the Silver Jubilee of the glorious victory of the Defence Forces of our country in the war of 1971 to liberate Bangladesh. I deem it a matter of great honour to be associated with this function in which we have some of the veterans of the 1971 War.

When the *Poorva Sainik Seva Parishad* invited me to attend this function, I was given a couple of subjects to choose from for the purpose of delivering my inaugural address. The first two subjects impressed me. These are: "Political Scenario before and during the War" and "Role of USA, China and USSR". I felt the two subjects were closely connected to each other. As a practitioner of politics and a student of political science, including international relations, I shall try to share with you my thoughts on the 1971 War in the perspective of these subjects.

The Bangladesh War was basically an off-shoot of the political chess-game that the Armed Forces of Pakistan often try to play. The problem started when the people of Pakistan voted the People's Party of Bhutto in West Pakistan and the Awami League of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in East Pakistan. The then military regime inwardly had no inclination of transferring power *de facto* to the popular Government. General Yahya Khan played Bhutto against Mujibur Rehman. Rehman wanted autonomy for East Pakistan through his six-point programme. Bhutto had no intention of playing second fiddle to Rehman. He played into the hands of Yahya Khan. In the process, under cover of holding East Pakistan under leash, Yahya Khan took recourse to army build-up. Rehman started his civil-disobedience. All sections of East Pakistan threw their weight with him. Yahya unleashed Army crackdown of devastating brutality on East Pakistan. Rehman himself was imprisoned. Ten million refugees moved across the border to West Bengal. Cross-border

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\*At the inaugural of the Silver Jubilee of the Bangladesh Liberation organised by the *Poorva Sainik Seva Parishad*, New Delhi, (17 December, 1996).

migration had economic as well as security implications. Economic, because something of the order of Rs. 700 crore had to be spent on the maintenance of the refugees. Security implications because East India, particularly the North-East, was vulnerable to terrorist and secessionist forces. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had to find a lasting solution sooner or later.

Those were the days of Cold War; of proxy wars by super powers—USA, erstwhile USSR and China being involved. These powers had a tragic urge, in what they perceived as their national interests to fish in waters of political trouble in whichever part of the world they could find them. The Bangladesh crisis in South Asia was a fertile ground for their fishing expeditions.

The United States under cover of 'containment of communism' provided arms supplies to Pakistan. In fact, they had been providing these supplies from much earlier than the Bangladesh crisis — even in the 1960s. Our country's efforts at seeking arms aid from USA were often repulsed. We were driven to seeking help from the Soviet Union. Obviously, USA had her national interest in pre-empting India from becoming a power centre in South Asia.

The Chinese also had their pipeline for supply of arms to Pakistan, though — seemingly — arms supplies to Pakistan both from USA and China might have been intrinsically incompatible.

From the 1950s, Sino-Indian relations had come under strain because of border disputes. Grant of asylum to Dalai Lama in India in 1959 added to the strain. Nor could China be at ease with Russia and India coming together. India has all along believed in non-alignment. As a major player in South Asia, India's non-alignment meant USA being kept at an arm's length. This situation suited Soviet Union. Camaraderie between India and Soviet Union was not to the liking of China, particularly in the context of China's own border problems with Soviet Union. This multilateral interface between India, USA, Soviet Union and China which was floating on the undercurrents of each of these countries national interests had a deep impact on Bangladesh crisis.

In the above background, it should be said much to the credit of the political leadership of India and of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at that time, that they kept the military option as the last resort. Considerable lot of diplomatic efforts were indeed made prior to the military option being exercised. She had extensive interactions with Henry Kissinger as well as President Nixon. Kissinger indicated possible Chinese intervention in the event of India's intervention in Bangladesh. No doubt, in the process, signals were also given about the disinclination of USA to come to the side of India on the issue. Shrewdly though, Mrs. Gandhi kept her counsel as regards her intentions in Bangladesh to herself. Indira Gandhi's suggestion for the release of Rehman and settlement through discussion with him did not find acceptance either.

As events developed further with Indira Gandhi's efforts at international diplomacy, the Indo-Soviet Treaty followed. She convinced the Soviet side finally that the emergence of Rehman would not mean the emergence of a pro-Western or pro-Chinese Bangladesh. Moscow recognised India's right to choose her options as per her discretion. Indira Gandhi scored a diplomatic triumph through her tenacious patience.

The approach of the Armed Forces of India in the Bangladesh crisis was marked by a commendable degree of self-restraint and caution. They gave due consideration to the incredible problems of fighting a war in the difficult terrain of Bangladesh and in inclement weather conditions. The dangers in possible Chinese incursions through the Tibetan passes, given the favourable weather conditions for the Chinese, were taken into account too. The future political costs if a liberated Bangladesh were not politically credible and viable were reckoned as well. Alliances were established on ground with the Mukti Bahini. Investments were also made in training the Mukti Bahini.

How we won the War subsequently is a matter of history. Going into the details of the operation would be like carrying coal to New Castle in this assembly where veterans of 1971 are present. Briefly stated, however: Pakistan had no insight into the ultimate objectives or the real capabilities of the Indian Forces; they had no clue regarding the Indian thrust in the West; perhaps, the political decision-makers in Pakistan had faulted in terms of centralised decision-making; Pakistan was concentrating on the peripheries of East Pakistan with a high degree of defence orientation, oblivious of possible aggressive penetration by India into deeper areas; the Mukti Bahini, motivated as it was by high levels of patriotism, was giving demonstrable ancillary information support in logistics — though, of course, there is a view that the Mukti Bahini was not necessarily well-trained; the Bangladesh operations were an exercise in exemplary co-ordination between the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, each recognising the support of the other and not demonstrating the superiority of its own role against that of others; above all else, by declaring unilateral ceasefire, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reflected the maturity of our country's great civilization.

The surrender of General Niazi on the 16th of December, 1971 was undoubtedly one of the most glorious moments in our history. It marked the triumph of coordination between the country's cool and perseverant political leadership, of the popular backing for the War reflected in the Parliament and of the selfless heroism of our soldiers.

With these words and paying my humble homage to our known and unknown soldiers who sacrificed their lives during the Bangladesh War, I inaugurate this public Seminar on this Vijay Diwas.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Jai Hind.

## INDIA AND UK—NEW FRONTIERS OF COOPERATION\*

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I have had a delightful four-day visit to your country which is like a second home for Indians. Let me first express my gratitude to the hospitality extended to me by Rt. Honourable Madam Boothroyd and the British Parliament.

We are on our way to celebrating the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence. The manner of the celebration was discussed recently by the full body of the Indian Parliamentary Group. The Group has advised, with considerable enthusiasm, that the parliamentarians of the two countries should work out a common programme of celebrating the Jubilee in an appropriate manner so as to commemorate the smooth and peaceful transfer of power in 1947 and our cordial and cooperative relationship in all spheres, political, social, economic and cultural. In fact, this has been my main mission in undertaking this visit to United Kingdom. I have had very fruitful discussions in regard to this matter with the Honourable Speaker and other parliamentarians here. I shall be very happy, Madam Speaker, if you would also be pleased to undertake a return visit to New Delhi so that you can have a dialogue with our parliamentarians and perceive the depth of their interest.

On the 9th of December last, we celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the first sitting of our Constituent Assembly by honouring the surviving members of the Assembly. The British parliamentary precept and practice are pervasive in our Constitution. We cherish them and they have helped us to wield our Constitution as a dynamic instrument in our efforts at establishing an equitable social and economic order.

In their felicitations on 26th January 1950, when our Constitution was brought into force, His Majesty the King and Prime Minister Clement Attlee made special reference to the place of India in the Commonwealth. We have closely cooperated within the framework of the Commonwealth too. The

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\*At the Banquet hosted by Her Excellency Rt. Hon. Madam Betty Boothroyd, Speaker of the House of Commons, U.K., London, (11 February, 1997).

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has been quite vibrant over the years and has been of mutual benefit to us. We have, from time to time, identified the highest common measure of agreement amongst Commonwealth parliamentarians on matters of mutual concern and taken co-ordinated approach in handling them at the international level. We need to continue this style.

Since the middle of 1996, politics in India has undergone a sea-change. In earlier years, at the Centre, national parties used to be in power with regional parties in the Opposition. Now, the roles have come to be reversed and regional parties are in power. We seem to have entered upon an era of governance through coalition. But what is important to be noted is that political succession continues to be peaceful despite changes in the fortunes of parties. Democracy, indeed, has firm roots in India and democratic institutions continue to be vibrant and stable. It is this scenario in India which needs to be appreciated in the context of our bilateral relations, particularly in the economic sphere.

The Indo-British Partnership Initiative (IBPI) was initiated in 1993 by the joint efforts of our respective Prime Ministers. Since 1993, thanks to this Initiative, the volume of our bilateral trade has increased by over seventy per cent. At present the value of two-way trade is of the order of 2600 million pounds. The size of the British business community in India has more than doubled. Today, the United Kingdom is one of the largest investors in India, besides being our second largest trading partner in Europe.

Prime Minister John Major was with us at Calcutta recently at the Partnership Summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). We took stock of Indo-British cooperation over the years and re-dedicated ourselves to everincreasing economic cooperation in the forthcoming millennium. I would like to emphasise that this cooperation, to be sustained, should flow from continued political commitment on the part of the parliamentarians of our two countries. This commitment would also need to cut across political parties.

International terrorism is plaguing several parts of the world. The Indo-U.K. Extradition Treaty and Confiscation Agreement signed in 1992 are salutary instruments which are of immense value to India in meaningfully dealing with this problem. We gratefully acknowledge the British Government's cooperation in this regard.

In many countries in the world, including India, the credibility of the holders of public office has come under fierce scrutiny. This is because of their conduct conditioned by what Lord Nolan has referred to as "changes.....in the roles and working environment of politicians and other public servants".

I have read with considerable interest the Nolan Committee's Initial Report on 'Standards in Public Life'. What struck me about the Committee is the rather comprehensively inclusive reference to the expression 'holder of public office'. A very wide spectrum of functionaries has been covered — Ministers, civil servants, advisers, members of Parliament and those connected directly with public bodies.

I feel that this British exercise in regard to standards is of considerable value to us in India as well where leaders and Presiding Officers of legislative bodies have called for mechanisms to ensure probity in public life.

A few days from now, a Delegation of British Parliamentarians will be joining us in New Delhi in a Special Inter-Parliamentary Conference to discuss 'political inclusion' of women. I am sure they would enrich the debate in the Conference with their experience of the British Cabinet Sub-Committee on women's issues, women's National Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission and Revised Policy Appraisal Guidelines following up on the Beijing Declaration.

Our endeavour has always been to promote democracy, peace, stability and friendly relations among nations. India and the United Kingdom, 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. Consolidating the gains of our five decades cooperative relationship, let us look forward to the future with hope and optimism and strive towards contributing our best in realizing these objectives.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now request you all to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of Honourable Madam Betty Boothroyd and to the ever growing friendship and cooperation between the Governments and peoples of our two countries.

## INDIA AND EGYPT—BUILDING ON THE PAST\*

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It is a matter of great pleasure for all of us to meet Dr. Ahmad Fathy Sorour and his colleagues from Egypt at this Banquet.

It is a high powered Delegation that Dr. Sorour is leading. On the Delegation, apart from the Egyptian Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and senior members of the Egyptian Parliament, we have with us today Dr. Zakariya Azmy, Chief of Cabinet of the President.

As many of you may know, Dr. Sorour is an institution by himself with stunningly diversified experiences. He is, by his own right, an educationist, an academic, a jurist and an authority on human rights, apart from being an environment enthusiast.

This morning, the Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Dr. (Smt.) Heptulla and I have had extensive interactions bilaterally with the Egyptians on matters of our common concern. We covered a wide ground, discussing social, economic and diplomatic issues. I remained rivetted to my chair while listening to Dr. Sorour and felt that just being with him was education.

Some of the very significant observations he made were :

- Peace is primary and security should necessarily follow peace.
- Strong political relations are as important, if not more, than economic relations.
- Economic reform programmes should be tempered by social justice.
- India has a "Governing Parliament in the Region" and should continue to give lead with her democratic traditions.
- The Specialised Inter-Parliamentary Conference on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics") may be concentrating on political inclusion of women; but, in essence, it is a Conference for making the world safe for democracy.

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Egyptian Parliamentary Delegation led by His Excellency, Dr. Ahmad Fathy Sorour, Speaker of the People's Assembly of Egypt, New Delhi, (13 February, 1997).

- More than ever before, the principles underlying the Non-Aligned Movement have become relevant on account of the strong uni-polar trends in world politics; India and Egypt, as founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, should present a counter balance to these trends.
- Terrorism is not a local problem; it is international in its dimensions; the remedy for it is the economic uplift of the poor part of the world — that is, the South.

These observations, to my mind, are highly perceptive of national and international situations and social and economic concerns and, in fact, form the basis for good governance, international cooperation and peace.

India and Egypt have several commonalities. We are two ancient civilisations of the world. From about the 1950s, we have come to have our own democratic systems of governance. Having started off with protected and controlled economies, we are now going through the processes of liberalisation. From the Nehru-Nasser era, we have had close political camaraderie. For about a decade now, we have identified areas of our economic cooperation. We have set out for ourselves a well defined agenda for cooperation in the fields of industrialisation and infrastructure. We have also institutionalised cooperation through the mechanism of a Joint Commission.

We have also been reinforcing our economic cooperation by high level political exchanges, including at the level of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. This multi-faceted cooperation needs to continue. Liberalising as our economies are, the two countries should increasingly promote enterprise to enterprise contacts.

India being a country of diversities in religion, language and ethnicity, we do have social and economic problems stemming from this very diversity. Egypt has always appreciated this and been of support to us in times of our stress and crisis, particularly in shaping world opinion about India. We have also stood by the Egyptians in their trying moments, bilaterally as well as at multilateral levels. As mature people belonging to ancient civilisations, we have had our own respective lead roles. The synergy of our lead roles can significantly impact on the balancing of political power in the world. The parliamentarians of the two countries have a significant role to play in making this synergy sustainable.

We have been cooperating in the educational and cultural fields as well for nearly four decades, through a series of Cultural Exchange Programmes. We should particularly thank the Egyptian authorities for projecting India's

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way of life through the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Centre for Indian Culture in Cairo established in 1992. While political and economic cooperation brings about Government to Government understanding, it is culture that brings about people-to-people contact and understanding.

The Delegation has a rather tight schedule of engagements. We should understand that Dr. Sorour has also a special stature as the President of the IPU Council with consequent responsibilities. I wish him and his Delegation a very pleasant stay in India.

Stealing the poetic expressions of my colleague Dr. (Smt.) Najma Heptulla, who, I find, is a special person for the Egyptians, let me assure all of you that Indo-Egyptian relations will be as long lasting and firm as the Pyramids of Giza and as smooth flowing as the waters of the Ganges.

With these words, let me now propose a toast to the good health and prosperity of Dr. Sorour and his colleagues and for everlasting Indo-Egyptian friendship.

## INDIA AND SAUDI ARABIA— EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS\*

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The people and the Parliament of India are immensely pleased about the visit of your distinguished Delegation. It is a matter of great honour for me to welcome you on their behalf. I recall with pleasure my visit to your great country in October '96, when I had very fruitful discussions with Your Excellency, members of the the Majlis-Al-Shoura and other high dignitaries on bilateral, regional and international issues. The exchange of these visits opens up a new chapter in the history of cooperation between our two countries.

Indo-Saudi Arabian friendship dates back to several centuries. Recent years have witnessed exchange of high level visits between the two countries. In December 1994, our former Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Riyadh for the Joint Commission Meeting. This was a significant development. His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Bin Sultan visited us in October '96. This was followed by further visits by His Excellency Dr. Ali Al Naimi, the Oil Minister and Dr. Mahmud Bin Mohammed, the Haj Minister. These visits gave impetus in the respective areas.

In this background, your visit is a significant milestone in India's traditional ties with the Kingdom. It provides an opportunity for us to learn of the experience and practices of your enlightened Consultative Committee. We are aware that consultations and consensus have been an aspect of decision-making in Saudi Arabia for more than 70 years. The meetings which the Delegation will have during its current visit will enable us to share our experiences and discuss modalities of cooperation between the Majlis and our Parliament, in addition to exchange of information.

India has always stood by the Arab cause, dating back from the days of our freedom struggle. India has the second largest Muslim community in the world. The impact of Islamic heritage which is part of our composite culture has enriched India's art and architecture, language and literature, and

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Parliamentary Delegation from the Saudi Arabian Consultative Council (Majlis-Al-Shoura), led by His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Ibrahim bin Jubair, Chairman of the Majlis-Al-Shoura, (17 March, 1997).

philosophy. Your Excellency and your distinguished Delegation will have glimpses of this in the course of your visit which, regretfully, is too short.

Through constitutional provisions backed up by appropriate institutional mechanisms, we practise protection of minority rights in a totally non-discriminatory manner. This indeed is a very salient feature of our concept of secularism. Minorities have always held significant positions at crucial decision-making levels as well, apart from level of high dignitaries. They have occupied exalted Offices like those of the President of the country, Governors and Chief Ministers of States, Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts, besides top positions in the Armed Forces.

Over one million Indians constitute the largest expatriate group in Saudi Arabia. We appreciate the employment opportunities extended to them by the people and the Government of Saudi Arabia. They do play a constructive role in the economic development of the Kingdom. This is mutually beneficial for our two countries. Our endeavour has always been to see that the Indian work-force in Saudi Arabia conducts itself with sincerity, dedication and discipline, always conforming to the laws of their host country. They are a matter of pride for us. I am sure, Your Excellency, that the care of our work-force is safe in your trust.

India and Saudi Arabia share many common concerns. We are Non-Aligned; we are committed to world peace; we fight terrorism and promote economic development.

Saudi Arabia is now India's largest trading partner. Recent years have witnessed a significant growth in economic exchange between our two countries. Bilateral trade has increased from 1.8 billion dollars to 2.2 billion dollars over the last 2 years, an increase of 25 per cent. But India has quite a huge adverse balance in our bilateral trade. Our liberalised economic policies and the dynamism of Saudi Arabia's economy offer wide-ranging opportunities to expand two-way trade and investments for mutual benefit. The special strength of India is its scientific and technological base, particularly in the areas of agriculture, water management, bio-technology, pharmaceuticals, education and computer software. This technological base is a solid foundation for building the edifice of our economic cooperation.

Your Excellency, I wish you and your Delegation a very fruitful stay with us. Your visit has further strengthened the mutual understanding and goodwill between our two countries. I am sure, you will carry back with you very pleasant memories of this visit. We look forward to continued, successful exchanges between the Indian Parliament and the Majlis-Al-Shoura which should confirm and reconfirm the political commitment of our two countries for sustained mutual cooperation in all fields — scientific and technological, economic, social and cultural.

Let me thank you again for your visit and your kind attention.

## INDIA AND IRELAND— DIVERSIFIED COOPERATION\*

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It is a matter of immense pleasure for me, on behalf of the people and the Parliament of India, to extend a very hearty welcome to the Irish Parliamentary Delegation.

The histories of our countries do have parallels. Early Irish history dates back to the year 3000 B.C. Our civilisation is as old. Ireland came under successive invasions down the centuries. This is true of India as well. Both our countries came under British rule and we became free from the Britons through struggle. Both our countries have had partitions too with attendant problems.

President V.V. Giri, one of the soldiers of our freedom struggle, during his student days, came under the spell of Irish freedom struggle. He drew his inspiration from de Valera. He came in close contact with Collins, Pearce, Desmond Fitzgerald, MacNeil, Connoly and others. Giri's deep commitment to the working people was in no small measure due to the impact the Irish trade union movement had on him.

India and Ireland have had excellent bilateral relations starting from the very early days of our Independence marked by exchanges at the highest levels. Eamon de Valera visited India in 1948. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, visited Ireland twice, in 1949 and 1956.

In later years, two other Presidents of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy visited Ireland. President Patrick Hillery and President Mary Robinson also visited India. There have been exchanges of Parliamentary Delegations too. We cherish lovely memories of your own two earlier visits in 1989 and 1993.

Your Excellency, when we met this forenoon, you were pleased to describe our system of governance as one of the finest democracies in the world. This

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Irish Parliamentary Delegation led by His Excellency Mr. Sean Treacy, Speaker of the Irish Dail, New Delhi, (31 March, 1997).

is true of Ireland as well. Right now, in your country, you are having a 'rainbow coalition' of 7 political parties/groups. Since June, we have tried to be more colourful and attempted governance through the joint efforts of 13 political parties. Rainbows, of course, are not like diamonds. They are not for ever. But what is important about rainbows are the factors which cause them, that is, sunshine and rain. And without sunshine and rain, life is not possible. Behind our political rainbows we have the lifeline of democracy.

I find that your Delegation consists of eminent persons with extensive experience in the areas of agriculture, industry, surface transport, international trade, energy, education, health, social welfare, international relations, etc.

Right now we, in India, are going through a phase of economic reforms. Our main concern is to balance economic reforms with equity and social justice. Ireland is a free economy. The social and economic life of Ireland has always been characterised by concern for the working people. We have a lot to learn from the Irish experience. As I mentioned this morning, while on the one hand we are a poor country, we also have vibrant sections of our society which have considerable purchasing power. The prime aim of our poverty alleviation programmes is to put purchasing power in the hands of the poor as well — through education, skill development and employment opportunities. Enlightened and experienced as Your Excellency's Delegation is, I am sure, it can see for itself the enormous opportunities being held out by India to Irish business and industry and for economic cooperation between our two countries.

While Irish imports have been growing over the years, in absolute terms, Irish imports from India are only about 48 million pounds — about one-quarter of a per cent of Ireland's total imports. Ireland's exports to India are less than 20 million pounds — again less than 1 per cent of total Irish exports. The status of the two-way trade between our two countries would need to be gone into in detail so that its volume and value are significantly enhanced.

Ireland, I know, is very strong in education. There are many parts of India where significant contribution has been made in the area of education by the academic institutions of Christian Brothers which have been strong in Ireland as well. Some of the best talents of India have been thrown up by the Christian Brothers' institutions. Our toils for spreading education in our country could be considerably strengthened if there are educational exchanges as between institutions, faculty members and students in our two countries. These exchanges could be particularly oriented to education relevant to the world of work — technical and technological education.

Having been a practising politician and having interacted extensively with international communities over the last two decades, I can say with

conviction that Irish interests have never run counter to Indian interests. Irish history has always been free of racial prejudices. Ties of affection which evolved during the common political struggle for freedom in Ireland and India are still strong, though the knowledge of each other is not so widespread. Lot of people-to-people interactions could be encouraged to mutual benefit. I am aware that already steps of this nature have been quite welcome in Ireland. I refer to Ireland-India Cultural Society, India Club and the Ireland-India Business and Economic Association (IIBEA) which was officially launched last year by the Irish Minister of Tourism and Trade, Mr. Enda Kenny.

Your Excellency, the visit of your Delegation is of a very short duration. Within the very short time you have been able to spare, we can't offer you more than a glimpse of our life. We look forward to a more leisurely visit to India by you and your colleagues.

Before I conclude, may I take this opportunity to inform you how badly we missed President Mary Robinson during the recent Specialized IPU Conference on 'Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics' which we hosted in New Delhi in February 1997. Unfortunately for us, she could not spare her time. Please do convey our greetings to her.

I wish Your Excellency and your Delegation a very pleasant stay in our country. I am sure your visit will pave the way for ever increasing Indo-Irish cooperation in all sectors — economic, educational, social and cultural.

With these words, I have great pleasure in proposing a toast to Your Excellency, your Delegation, the peoples, the Parliaments and the Governments of our two countries.

## INDIA AND NORWAY— A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP\*

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I am very pleased to be here in this World Heritage city of breathtakingly wild beauty.

As we flew over to Bergen this morning, looking down from the plane, I felt as if vast spreads of a blue-green sea have been tucked deep into the mountains. Nature being so bountiful to Norway, and to this city in particular, it is no wonder that the people here give paramount importance to the protection of environment as a matter of policy.

Having arrived here, I tried to make a quick perceptual study of the people here. Several aspects of life here impressed me very much. The rate of growth of population is near zero. People are young. I gather that 50 per cent of the population is in the age group of 20 to 59 and only 20 per cent in the age of 60 and above. There is almost total enrollment of children for elementary and secondary education. Obviously, Bergensers would be educated, skilled and enlightened. Of course, the population here is only about one quarter of a million. But I do wish I could project the structure of your population on to our incredible 900 million in India.

Another factor which I find wonderful about Bergen is godliness. I straightaway feel the presence of your church in my bones. I understand that in the city's churches, about 4000 services are conducted in a year — an average of more than ten services per day. Business, trade and commerce do breed strong materialistic tendencies amongst people. And materialism, if it is crass, destroys the soul. With life being laced with some demonstrable degree of spirituality here, I am sure the Bergensers are a soulful lot.

This afternoon, we had the privilege of visiting the Edvard Greig Museum at Troidhaugen. We also had the pleasure of listening to a piano concert of Grieg's compositions on the peasantry, the birds and mountains

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\*At the Dinner hosted by the Deputy Mayor of Bergen Mr. Ole-Jorgen-Johannssen, Bergen, (1 June, 1997).

of Bergen. Even as we were moving around in the solitude of Troldhaugen, our memories were carried back to Haridas, Tansen and Rabindranath Tagore of India. The moving preservation of Greig's memory makes us believe that it is music as well that makes the Bergensers soulful.

Over the years, Norwegian economic cooperation with India has been quite meaningful. I would only mention about the marine fisheries revolution brought about in India by the Indo-Norwegian Project implemented in the 1960s. Development assistance from NORAD to India has also reflected that cooperation between our two countries has been rather steady.

Our economy has been going through a phase of liberalisation since 1991. India holds out significant investment opportunities, our special area of interest being infrastructure. I hope, and I am sure that the interaction my Delegation will have with the Norwegian authorities will help us enhance our cooperative relationship. I hope too that the Bergensers, with their old maritime, trading and business expertise will play a significant role.

I thank you all for your touching and generous hospitality. With these words, I have great pleasure in proposing a toast to the Worshipful Deputy Mayor, Mr. Ole-Jorgen-Johannssen, to Honourable Vice-President of Storting, Mr. Edvard Grimstad, to the Kommun and the people of Bergen.

## INDIA AND NORWAY—PROMOTING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS\*

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We have spent two wonderful days at Loen.

I should particularly thank Mr. Edvard Grimstad for the thoughtful way in which our programme here has been chalked out. In a totally relaxed way, we have seen the land, the people and their life here. It has been great education for us.

We have only read about full employment in economics texts. Today's world problem is recession and unemployment. It is amazing that in this part of your country you are practising full employment. It is obviously because access to education is universal and investment in education is very high.

Of course, you are experts in producing and exporting an unseen commodity — that is, electrical energy. Personally, it is a matter of great interest to me. I come from a region in India where hydro-electric potential is high. I have believed, this region could produce hydel power and trade on it with other States in my country.

Comparative advantage is another universally known economic concept. The way you are exploiting it is another lesson for us. You have carefully deployed your resources consistent with your comparative advantage — striking a very good balance between farming, industry and services. In striking this balance, you have worked in companionship with nature. Your cultivable areas are limited. So, you have concentrated on farming where feasible. You are rich in water resources and you produce hydel energy and export it, apart from industrialising.

Nature has been bountiful to you. You have seen a source of livelihood in your glaciers, waterfalls, rivulets, rivers and lakes and fjords. You have

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\*At the Dinner hosted by His Excellency, Mr. Knut Aarethun, Chairman of the County Council of Sogn and Fjordane, Loen, (3 June, 1997).

developed tourism. It was indeed very interesting this afternoon to learn from you that this enchanting land, which was being enjoyed only by the Lords, peers and mountaineers from Britain once upon a time, has become the preferred tourist place round the globe — anywhere from Japan to USA.

Today's political slogan in India is cooperative federalism. Here again, we have a lesson to learn from you. In this context, I am reminded of what was stated during this afternoon's presentation on Norwegian county system — that income is generated not merely in Oslo and Bergen, but in the counties in the districts. This is a message that would be useful for us back in India where we have made constitutional changes for decentralising administration and where we are making efforts to strengthen our States.

Tomorrow, we will be in Oslo. We shall convey our appreciation of the interest all of you have taken in making my Delegation a success, to the parliamentarians at Oslo. I am going to have the privilege of calling on His Majesty the King of Norway day after tomorrow. I shall convey our sentiments for you to His Majesty as well.

I may assure you that I look upon the experience of my Delegation's visit to this part of your country as a step in people-to-people contact between our two countries which is crucial for bilateral understanding in this globalising world and for sustained cooperation in all spheres of our lives — political, economic and cultural.

On my behalf and on behalf of my Delegation, let me say a special word of thanks to the management of Hotel Alexandra. Let me compliment Mr. Eivind Grov for the exceptionally professional services rendered to my Delegation by Hotel Alexandra.

Thank you for your attention.

## INDIA AND NORWAY— WARM AND CORDIAL TIES\*

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My Delegation and I have had the enchanting experience of travelling around your lovely country for four days now. This visit has been very educative for us, thanks to the purposeful way in which you have organised it.

We have been exposed in a very memorable way, but without any strain whatever, to Norwegian life — to your people as they live in your districts, to their agriculture, to your industries, to your technological strength and to your culture, not to speak of your vibrant democracy — from the level of the grassroots to the Storting.

You literally took us to the heights of your mountains and to the depths of your seas. I mean our visit to the Vetelefjorden Hydel Reservoir and to 30 metres beneath the Nordic Sea at Snorre. These visits were indeed chilling and adventurous.

You have given us a taste of every means of your transport during our four-day stay so far. We flew into Oslo by your Widere Airline. We reached the top of Vetelefjorden Hydel Project by cable car. From Loen to Sogndal we travelled by ship and bus. At Briksdal we rode in horse driven carts. Of course, there, we walked too up your lovely mountain tracks.

The Snorre Oil Drilling Project is indeed a technological marvel of mankind, unprecedented in nature. I think it is a marvel too in investment and organisational management. More than the technological and managerial capabilities of the Norwegians, the Snorre Project reflects an incredible feature of Norwegian character — to face the challenge of nature and concrete. The Vikings that you are, you have been sea-faring on the surface for centuries. Now you are extracting the hidden treasures of the earth from beneath the ocean-bed.

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\*At the Dinner hosted by Her Excellency, Ms. Kristi Kolle Grondahl, President of Storting, Oslo, (4 June, 1997).

The manner in which you have exploited your water resources and converted the same into a major export commodity by generating and trading on hydel power has valuable lessons for us.

The contradiction between the concerns of economic development and those of nature conservation has become a matter of frequent global debate. Our visit has given insights into how you manage this contradiction.

At Bergen, your heritage city, we had the pleasure of visiting the Edvard Greig Museum. We learnt there about what music means to you and how the Norwegians preserve the memory of their great artists.

Relations between India and Norway have traditionally been troublefree, warm and cordial. Norwegian ships have sailed the seas of Asia for 150 years and made substantial contributions to the development of trade and international economic relations. Our bilateral trade has also taken a quantum jump. And we hope that within Norway's strategic plans for Asia, India will occupy a prominent place. As you would be knowing, we are going through a phase of steady economic reforms. We look for foreign investment, particularly in the infrastructure sector — power, ports, telecommunications, etc. I am sure Norway too would look for availing of the immense investment opportunities now being held out by India.

Norwegian Development Assistance of India has all along been low profile in demonstration but very significant and substantial in content and results, including in long-term. Mechanisation of fishing industry in India has been a lasting contribution of the Indo-Norwegian project of the 1960s. NORAD is an institution people are familiar with in all parts of India.

I shall be meeting the Ministers in Norwegian Government tomorrow. I look forward to having very meaningful interactions with them on various aspects of Indo-Norwegian cooperation.

As Union Minister of Labour in India for many years, I have had the opportunities to sense the understanding Norway has unfailingly demonstrated in the matter of our approach to our problems. I would make particular mention of the child labour issue. The developmental approach, as distinct from the legalistic and technical approach, that we have followed for handling this problem has received Norwegian understanding. On this issue, we in India have deeply appreciated that Norway has not been taking positions from high moral ground. Norwegian concern in this regard has been purely humanistic and pragmatic, not in any way influenced by extraneous factors like international trade.

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India and Norway share common values — values of democracy and peace. Your Storting has a much longer history than our Parliament. The authority of the Storting came to be established as early as the landmark Eidsvoll Constitution of 1814, much before other countries had even thought of the concept of Parliament. I believe there is much in terms of parliamentary experience and practice of democracy which we could compare notes on, and share.

Empowerment of women by facilitating their political participation equally with men is the debate of the day. You have achieved more than 40 per cent presence of women in the Storting. We are just now starting our efforts in this regard. We have introduced the 81st Constitution Amendment. Of course there are differences of perception on the modalities of achieving this but the basic acceptance of the concept is there.

Probity and standards in public life is a matter of concern all over the world today. The world knows Norway's contribution of the institution of Ombudsman. We too, in India, are proposing to establish a similar institution — the Lok Pal. Of course we would be studying how the Ombudsmen work here for us to carry lessons back home.

Terrorism is a scourge which needs to be strongly put down. Without peace, there is no survival and terrorism is a very potent factor which disrupts peace. We in India have deeply mourned and shared the anguish of Norwegians over the death of the Norwegian tourist, Hans Christian Ostro at the hands of the terrorists in Kashmir.

Let me, before concluding, place on record our very deep appreciation of the affectionate care given to us by the Vice-President of Storting, Mr. Grimstad. A special word of thanks to Mr. Bard too. I also express my gratitude for the incredible hospitality that we have enjoyed in your hands. Thank you for your attention and Norwegian development assistance to India.

## INDIA AND SWEDEN— LEGACY OF SHARED VALUES\*

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My Delegation and I have had an enchanting week of visits in your country, thanks to your very generous hospitality.

Our visit to Sweden and your Nordic neighbours is going to be specially memorable to us. We will associate this visit with the year of the Golden Jubilee of our Independence which 1997 is.

It was in 1957 that our first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited Sweden. Prime Minister Tage Erlander visited India in 1959. What has followed over these four decades is steady high level exchanges between our two countries and of parliamentarians. We look back, with honour, the visit of His Majesty the King of Sweden to India in October, 1993.

Thanks to your thoughtfully organised programme, we have been exposed to your tender sentiments for the Sami indigenous minorities and to your system of local governance in the Uplands at Kiruna; to your industrial strength at Alfa Laval Agri and LKAB; to your scientific and technological excellence at the Satellitbild of the Swedish Space Corporation; to your culture at the Vasa Museum; to your concern for world development at SIDA; and to your democracy in action at the Riksdag. The insights we gained into your political party system, governance through electoral alliances and parliamentary committee system are very valuable to us. It was also a matter of personal honour for me and my country that His Majesty the King could find time to grant me an audience.

India has been a substantial recipient of Swedish development assistance. Till now, cumulatively, on Indian projects, Sweden has disbursed more than seven billion Swedish Kroners. We are aware of Swedish

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\*At the Dinner hosted by Her Excellency, Mrs. Birgitta Dahl, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, Stockholm, (11 June, 1997).

priorities in assistance. They do converge with our own national priorities as well—energy, environment and social sector, particularly removal of poverty, primary health and education.

Swedish economic growth has been a trade-led growth. But Swedish trade is largely Euro-centered. Diversification of the directions of your trade and investment could significantly help India. You can ask: “Why should Sweden do this”? There are quite a few answers:

- Industrialised countries, including Sweden, having saturated traditional markets, are looking for new markets. India is a vast market.
- With economic reforms, our economy has opened up. The process is steadily continuing.
- Swedish experience of investments in India is more than three quarters of a century old. Atlas Copco, Alfa Laval and SKF are household names in Indian industry. Having production units in India, your industry is also part of Indian industry.
- In absolute size, however, your investments in India are rather low — only about 12 million US dollars from 1981 to 1990 and about 350 million US dollars since 1991.
- The two-way trade between Sweden and India is only around 650 million US dollars.
- We have entrepreneurship.
- We are Anglo-phone as well.
- We have a good track-record of honouring trade and industrial commitments.
- Above all, we are a democratic polity and an open society.

The award of Nobel Prize to poet Rabindranath Tagore as early as 1913 was a matter of great honour for us. It symbolised international recognition of our cultural excellence. And, all along, the peoples of our two countries have shown keenness in cultural and academic cooperation. We need to strengthen this cooperation through the Indo-Swedish Memorandum of Understanding on Culture and Education signed in 1995. My country believes in the establishment of a new world social order in which democracy will be the way of life; economies will grow with equity and social justice; women will live in equality with men; children will not lose their childhood due to any form of abuse or exploitation; family as an institution will be preserved for providing lasting social stability;

environment will be protected sustainably; terrorism in any form will be put down; and above all, lasting peace will prevail by universal and non-discriminatory disarmament. And we know that Sweden shares these values.

Your Excellency Mrs. Birgitta, I have known of another Birgitta of Sweden. She lived in the fourteenth century—St. Birgitta. She established a new Holy Order. With your diversified experience ranging from your Kommune to the United Nations, I see in you the Birgitta who would, along with your people, make lasting contribution to the establishment of the world social order of our shared values.

May I formally request you to lead a Parliamentary Delegation to India at your earliest convenience?

I also place on record our special word of thanks to Mrs. Kristina Zakrisson, member of Parliament and Mr. Lars Starell of your Parliament Secretariat for their caring help during our visit.

Thank you once again for your hospitality and your attention.

## INDIA AND FINLAND— DIVERSIFIED RELATIONS\*

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We have had very meaningful visits yesterday to the Nokia Corporation and to the Kvaerner Masa Yards and today we have had a very worthwhile and educative exposure to the Finnish parliamentary system, not to speak of our visit to the rapturous Mannerheim Museum. We are looking forward to the delight of our visit to Vaasa tomorrow and day after, and exposure to life amongst the local people, your academics and artisans.

Since the 1960s, we have been having very high level exchanges — at the level of our Presidents and Prime Ministers and Cabinet Ministers, apart from that of our Parliaments. It was a matter of great pleasure and honour for us to receive His Excellency President Marti Ahtisaari on a state visit in our country late in 1996. I also had the honour of an audience with His Excellency earlier today.

Finland and India share common values and comparable experiences. We have always believed in peace; Finland has avoided being a member of any military alliance and India has been a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement; through Cold War, *detente* and thereafter, both our countries have practised neutrality; we stand for protection of human rights and reject violence and racial and any other form of discrimination; we are active members of the United Nations and its specialised agencies. Under the umbrella of the Nordic Council, Finland has had experience of regional cooperation. We are also attempting regional cooperation in South Asia through the SAARC.

Amongst the values that India and Finland share are the Rule of Law and supremacy of the people. In open and democratic societies, transparency in the actions of the State is given significant importance. The authority of the State being exercised by those who hold public offices, transparency of the actions of such persons also assumes importance. Indeed such transparency of action is also the expectation of the people. Nordic countries are pioneers in this area. I have been studying their

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\*At the Dinner hosted by Her Excellency Mrs. Riitta Uosukainen, Speaker of the Parliament of Finland, Helsinki, (13 June, 1997).

system in this respect closely during my visits. The institution of Parliamentary Ombudsman as it functions in Finland is quite interesting for us and I shall be conveying lessons drawn from your experience to the Indian Parliamentary Group on ethics in public life which is seized of the matter.

In our political life, we have entered a phase in which single-party governance has given place for coalitions. Securing political stability through coalitions calls for considerable political sophistication and maturity. The dynamics and rhythm of Finnish coalition politics is very relevant to us now, as those of other Nordic countries.

We are aware that Finland ranks amongst the most prosperous countries in the world. Your strengths are your industries, particularly in the areas of metals, engineering, electronics, chemicals and forestry. As a member of the European Union, you are playing a significant role in European affairs. Finland has helped us by extending support in the EU Communication on India-EU Partnership. We look forward to the continued support from Finland in all fora of the European Union, particularly the European Parliament when India related issues come to be considered.

Due to geographical and historical reasons, the Nordic countries, including Finland, have been Euro-centric, as I observed the other day during my interaction with our Swedish friends at Stockholm. In today's world, when all the nations are facing the challenge of globalisation, when information technology is bringing the nations of the world into a close knit village and when the airwaves reach out to all parts of the globe transcending political boundaries, international trade could have a far wider geographical spread. Such a spread will be to the mutual benefit of the trading nations. The two-way trade between India and Finland is only of the order of about US \$250 million. This needs to be significantly expanded.

A close analysis of the items of trade between our two countries reflects that a significant part of India's exports to Finland consists of commodities. We do look forward to enhancing exports of manufactured goods and value added products. We believe that a scrutiny of the strengths and potentials of our two countries could help us in bringing about a sea-change in the mix of goods that our two countries could mutually trade on. With globalisation and economic liberalisation, including in India, cross-border movement of capital has also started taking place. Nordic countries do have production units in India. India now holds out attractive opportunities for Foreign Direct Investment. During the 10th Session of the Indo-Finnish Joint Commission late in 1996, a comprehensive review of investment flows and technological collaborations between our two countries has been made and potential areas for investment and technology tie-ups have been identified, some of the important areas being energy, power generation and transmission, ports, electronics and software, forest based industries, packaging and environment. This has to be followed up.

Since the commencement of economic reforms in India, up to 1995, Finland has collaborated in 57 ventures in India, investment being of the order of about US \$13 million. New Finnish companies which have entered the Indian market are Nokia Telecommunications, Repola in the area of forestry and metals, Kemira in the area of chemicals, Ahlstrom in the area of pulp and paper machinery, etc. I have no doubt that Finnish experience in India by itself will pave the way for ever increasing commercial, investment and technological collaboration between our two countries.

While bilateral cooperation between the countries is put on a formal footing by Government level and parliamentary exchanges, what would ultimately create sustained rapport between cooperating countries is people-to-people contact. The lovers of art and culture as the people of Finland are, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations has already successfully sponsored several cultural troupes to Finland. There has been an upsurge of Finnish interest in Indian culture, particularly since Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Finland in 1983. I also find that a significant number of expatriate Indians in Finland have popularised Indian cuisine amongst the people here. India, being a sub-continent with a very ancient history and with different climatic zones and altitudes, offers good value for their expenditure to the tourists. Now the Finnish tourists are running in thousands. There is scope for the figure to run into hundreds of thousands. I believe that there is a tremendous scope too for enhancement of the number of tourists from India to Finland with marginally higher expenses than they now incur. For, European capitals in any case have been on the beaten track of the Indians travelling overseas. Finnish presence in the Indian mind and psyche needs to be projected.

When my Delegation and I leave Helsinki, we shall carry with us lovely memories about your country, your people and your institutions. May I now extend our invitation to Your Excellency Mrs. Riita Uosukainen, Speaker of the Parliament of Finland, to lead a Finnish Parliamentary Delegation to India as early as feasible? Let me also place on record our very deep appreciation of the very generous hospitality extended by you, and of the excellent programme organised for us in your fabulous country.

With these words, I have great pleasure in requesting you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in a toast to the health of Her Excellency Mrs. Riitta Uosukainen, Speaker of the Parliament of Finland; to the progress and prosperity of the Finnish people; and to the friendship between India and Finland.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND AUSTRALIA—NEW AVENUES OF COOPERATION\*

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I deeply appreciate the gesture of the United India Association in having invited me for this dinner.

Mankind, down the ages, has always migrated in search of livelihood. It is glamorous. It is adventurous too. That is how, all of you are here in Australia—in search of livelihood with its glamour as well as its adventure. Migration is glamorous because there is always a charm and even an inward fantasy about living in a foreign land; adventurous because getting uprooted from one's traditional moorings and exposure to a new people and environment could mean culture shock and problems of adjustment.

As you should be knowing, no doubt, there is considerable goodwill for India in Australia. This is largely due to our democratic system, our membership in the Commonwealth fraternity, our passion for cricket and, of course, the liberalisation of our economy which holds out significant business opportunities. The Indian community here has a vital role to play in reinforcing this goodwill. How do you do this?

First of all, by presenting a picture of unity and solidarity of the community. Even inadvertently, caste and community distinctions should not be displayed. The very fact and circumstances of living in a foreign land, thousands of miles away, I am sure, would bring you and hold you together.

I have known of expatriate Indian communities who have been living for generations in the Caribbeans. There, Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike don't allow matters of faith to come in the way of their solidarity. They freely inter-marry without any social or community inhibitions. In fact, they consider it a serious affront to be seen as belonging to any particular religion or caste. We have this model. You are "United India" Association. I am sure that you would live up to the thoughtfully designed name of your Association.

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\*At the Dinner hosted by the United India Association, Sydney, (21 June, 1997).

Back home, we are making very serious and sincere efforts to establish camaraderie with our immediate neighbouring countries. I am sure that people from other South Asian countries would also have come to Australia as expatriates. You should establish camaraderie and solidarity with them as well.

Just as I was leaving for Australia, the electronic Media was full of news about clashes in UK between expatriate Indian and Pakistani communities in the course of viewing a movie called *Border*. This has been quite unfortunate. By such conduct, we don't project ourselves as the land of enlightenment and tolerance, as a nation of thousands of years of civilisation.

I am sure that many of you are business people and professionals. Indians, the world over, are known for their dedication, industry and professionalism. I am sure that you would have established a reputation in this country as well for these qualities.

International conventions relating to migrant communities call for equality of treatment for migrants with host country nationals. Concurrently, as expatriates, you would need to demonstrate meticulous conformity with the regime of local laws in letter and spirit. More importantly, you should display demonstrable identification with the concerns of the Australians. Indeed, this should be spontaneous and a way of your life.

Very recently, I have been travelling around some of the highly industrialised countries. One of the problems faced in these countries, side by side, with their economic prosperity, is their societal malady on account of a high incidence of divorce and breakdown of the family. I have always held that our strength and the highest form of our social security, are to be seen in the stability of our family system. You should continue to lay stress on family values even while abroad.

Since 1991, we have been going through a speedy phase of economic liberalisation and structural adjustment. This has indeed unleashed forces of entrepreneurship. We hold out immense opportunities for international trade and investments. These opportunities are there for you as well to avail of. With your roots in India and base in Australia. I would consider that, in fact, you are in a specially advantageous position for availing of these opportunities. You may like to bear in mind, in this context, that we in India have a new "Look East" policy with emphasis on enhancing economic interaction with the Asia Pacific Region. You would further like to recall, in this context, that towards the end of last year, Australia successfully conducted the "New Horizons Promotion" programme in India.

My own belief is that this has helped projecting the Australian capabilities in our country.

I am sure that you are aware of the Australia-India Council and the India-Australia Council which have been set up, respectively, in 1992 and 1995, to strengthen and broaden India-Australia relations. You should make these institutions a veritable movement for sustained social, economic and cultural contacts between India and Australia.

Let me thank you again for your kind and generous hospitality.

## INDIA AND AUSTRALIA—STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS OF COOPERATION\*

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It is a matter of great pleasure for me and my Delegation to be here amidst you in this reception.

Due to historical and other reasons, we have been Euro-centred and America-centred in terms of our economic and social interactions. This factor has had considerable impact even in shaping our attitudes. Even in our interactions with Europe and America, we have concentrated on what I would call on-the-beat countries — U.K., France, Germany, USA, etc. There are very many important countries, highly industrialised and culturally rich, off the beat as well, interactions with whom would be mutually beneficial. Recently, therefore, I have led Parliamentary Delegations to some countries off the beaten track — Norway, Sweden and Finland. It is in the same breath that I have now come with some of my parliamentary colleagues to Australia. What was interesting to me, even amazing, in the Nordic countries was the deep interest and awareness exhibited by the people and leaders about India.

Having been the Union Minister for Coal, and having gone through the rather educatively prepared Australia note of our High Commissioner, I find that India-interest in Australia has been increasing in intensity. I also understand that many of the Australian authorities holding high offices today are friends of India. Now, we are also following a "Look East Policy".

We have further tried to institutionalise arrangements for strengthening Indo-Australian relations at the level of the peoples, Governments and Business. I refer to the Australia-India Council, the India-Australia Council, the Joint Ministerial Commission and the India-Australia Business Forum. There have been high level exchanges. As you would all be aware, Australians projected their country in India through their "New Horizons Promotion" programme.

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\*At the Reception hosted by the Australia-India Association, Canberra, (22 June, 1997).

What is vital, equally with institutionalised arrangements for cooperation between India and Australia, is the day-to-day involvement of the Indian community here in creating the right image about ourselves amongst the Australian people and decision-makers. We need to project ourselves as people of skills, professionalism, awareness, enlightenment and productivity-orientation. Your contribution to the Australian economy and society should come to be recognised and valued.

As Union Minister for Commerce in earlier years, I have had exposure to Indians in business in various parts of the world. We are indeed recognised as people with commendable entrepreneurial skills. But a problem sometimes presented to the Government by business people abroad was non-conformity with obligations in terms of timeliness of execution of contracts and quality of goods and products supplied. I am aware that Indian business people do have certain problems in trade on account of the nature of organisation of our industries. Manufactured export products are not always produced in high scales of operation. Exporters are often faced with the necessity of collecting the traded goods from a number of medium or small scale producers. Consequently, they face problems in effecting timely supply of goods; and products also sometimes tend to be non-standard. But, these domestic problems will not be matters of concern for the importers. It is upto our business community to organise themselves for pre-shipment inspections of traded goods by self discipline and self regulation. Importers may not always be satisfied with product quality certification by official agencies. Everybody knows that quality cannot be inspected into products. Business reputation can be built up only by unflinching and sustained contract compliance. One of the worst things that can happen to the business reputation and image of a country is for expatriate business people to be seen as exploiters.

One of the commonalities between India and Australia is that we have been significant exporters of primary products. We in India have been attempting, over the years, to switch over to increasing the number and volume of value added goods so that employment opportunities are generated, apart from promoting economic growth. The Indian business community here, having the advantage of hands-on experience of Australian business styles, could identify Australian counterparts to enter into joint ventures, be it here in Australia or in India or in third countries, for establishing enterprises which would contribute to value addition and which would be for their mutual benefit.

Cultural contacts, people-to-people, are quite important for our two countries to understand each other's histories, societies, traditions, thought

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processes and lifestyles. Recently, when I was in Norway, parliamentarians there made a lot of enquiries about a novel in English *The God of Small Things* written by an up-and-coming young lady novelist Ms. Arundhati Roy. It has even been translated in other foreign languages. This novel has been acclaimed the world over as a great contribution to English language and literature, though the novel itself is based on day-to-day life and tragedies in a South-western corner of India. I am sure that there would be Australians also who are making path breaking contributions to the world of literature and arts. The Indian community here would need to keep track of the latest developments in the world of fine arts back home and share knowledge about the same with their Australian friends in a continuing two-way process of intellectual interaction as creativity is a continuous process and doesn't freeze in time.

Now, I would stop. Before stopping, let me also compliment the organizers of this beautiful evening and let me further assure that the Australia-India Association has today added a new friend to its ranks — that is myself.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND AUSTRALIA— COMMONALITY OF VIEWS\*

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My Indian colleagues and I feel honoured in having been invited for this dinner.

India and Australia have many commonalities as regards our past as well as the present. Australia is a continent. We are a peninsula in Asia, but a sub-continent, nevertheless. Between East and West and North and South, our distances are comparable. Because of our geographical spread latitudinally and longitudinally, we have different agro-climatic conditions and, therefore, a variety of flora and fauna and agrarian activities. We were spotted by Western explorers which ultimately led to our colonization by the British. But, we both are members of the Commonwealth of Nations. We are pluralistic societies. We have our languages, but we are Anglophone as well. We have democratic systems of governance of the Westminster model and have borrowed from American constitutional experience too. We share political power with our federating States (provinces) by the establishment of State level Legislatures. We have a three-tier system, local bodies at the base level providing for city and municipal administration. Our legal systems are also based on the British model. Above all else, we are great cricketers of the world. Of course, the most important difference between our two countries is that you are a small population of about 18 million, whereas we are a population of about 960 million, currently adding an Australia to our population every year.

The bilateral relations between our two countries have been very cordial and friendly. Considerable warmth in the relationship has been infused through intensity of high level exchanges since the exchange of visits between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Prime Minister Bob Hawke, respectively, in 1986 and 1989. External relations, international trade, textiles, employment, communications and railways are some of the crucial areas

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\*At the Dinner hosted by His Excellency, Honourable Bob Halverson, OBE, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Canberra, (23 June, 1997).

in respect of which ministerial exchanges have taken place. Vice-President K.R. Narayanan came here in 1994. Of course, we have been looking forward to the visit of Prime Minister John Howard to India.

Before coming here, we have had a delightful day at Sydney. The mere cruise on the Darling Harbour was an exposure at once to the water bound civilization of the place, to at least two centuries of the history of a piece of Australia, to the admixture of tradition and modernism in Australian life as lived there, to a skilful balance between modernization and industrialization on the one hand and protection of environment on the other. We look forward to visiting the place again in the return lap of our journey back to India.

Today, apart from the honour of an audience with His Excellency the Governor-General, I have had the pleasure of very fruitful discussions with the Acting Prime Minister and the Minister of Trade, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Australia-India Parliamentary Group. These discussions, I believe, helped me in presenting our perspectives and concerns on parliamentary democracy, international relations, international trade and economic growth and development for an objective understanding by the Australian authorities. They also helped me and my Delegation in understanding the House of Representatives at work here. In the coming few days, we are looking forward to witnessing your Senate in action and to the style of functioning of the Legislative Assembly at Melbourne.

The programme for my Delegation has indeed been very thoughtfully and educatively organised. My compliments and gratitude in this regard to the Australian Parliament and especially to Your Excellency, Honourable Bob Halverson.

In the federal set-up of India, we do have stresses and strains from time to time in inter-governmental relations — that is between the Central and State Governments, though we have institutional arrangements for coordination in the form of Inter-State Council, the Planning Commission, the Finance Commission and the National Development Council. Increasingly, the political trend in India is for establishment of cooperative federalism by strengthening the States. In this context, we find the Australian model of Annual Premiers' Conferences and the Council of Australian Governments for the macro-economic and political management of the country quite interesting and educative.

One significant feature of the bilateral relationship is that arrangements for the same have been institutionalized. We have the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) at the Government level, the Joint Business Council at the business level and the Australia-India and India-Australia Councils at

the peoples' level. These institutions, I am sure, would be active and vibrant so that our political equations, business development and cultural interactions are sustained and systematic.

The two-way trade between our two countries now is of the order of about US \$ 1375 million. But, India's share in Australia's imports and exports is only of the order, respectively, of 0.7 per cent and 1.5 per cent. The mix of goods in the two-way trade is also rather limited to a few products. There is need for a significant expansion of trade.

No doubt, Australian investments in India have grown in recent years. Since 1991, the year of commencement of economic reforms in India, Australian investment has crossed one billion Australian Dollars. And, about 200 joint venture agreements have been signed. The most significant and largest presence in India is, of course, that of ANZ Grindlays. Other important Australian Corporations which have come to invest in India are Telstra, Stanlite Pacific and AWA — all in the area of telecommunications. Our preferred area for foreign investments is infrastructure — mining, power generation, oil and gas, telecommunications, environmental engineering and construction sector.

I am aware that trade and investment expansion between our two countries is a function of increasing economic liberalisation. It was in 1991 that we embarked upon serious economic reforms and structural adjustment. Australia has had a longer experience in this regard. It is over the last 15 years or so that the Australian economy also has gone through serious deregulation. Before that, regulation had several parallels in the system of controls we had developed since 1947. Now, the reform process in India has virtually become the common agenda for all political parties. Our problem being the size of our population and marked economic disparities and stratification in the society, we are treading the cautious and step-by-step path. Nonetheless, economic growth in India is accelerating and has reached 7.0 per cent per annum in recent years. Even in our latest budget, we have reduced duties on goods relevant to exports from Australia like wool, coking coal and non-coking coal. We look forward to Australia also reducing import duties on textiles, clothing and leatherwares.

Significant share of our exports, imports and Inward Direct Investments are linked to the APEC countries. We are also committed to the goal of reducing our tariff to the level of ASEAN by the year 2020. We are further committed to the goal of total liberalisation of all trade and investments by the year 2000. In this background, we look forward to Australian support for our quest for membership in the APEC. We are also grateful to Australia for extending support to us for becoming guest members of

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APEC Working Groups. And, as Full Dialogue Partners of the ASEAN and members of the ARF, we look forward to working together with them for expanding economic cooperation and regional security in the Asia-Pacific region in the coming years.

With our ability to produce a rather wide range of goods, our vast technically qualified human resources capable of absorbing technology, with the fast increasing numbers of the middle class with purchasing power, numbering about 250 million now, with our entrepreneurship, with our communication capabilities being English-speaking as well, with our good track-record in honouring business commitments and, above all, with our democratic systems of dispute resolution, India does offer a logical and highly worthwhile market for trade and investments. India, now follows a 'Look East Policy'. Australia has a 'Look West Policy' as well, as reflected in her major thrusts in the South-East Asian Region. The confluence of these two policies, I am sure, is bound to result in ever increasing profiles of our two countries in each other's economies and India, from South-East Asia, is but a stone's throw. The old saying "East is East; West is West; and the twain shall never meet" is bound to be proved wrong in economic terms in the forthcoming years. And, indeed, the implementation of the Australian 'New Horizons Promotion' programme in India last year end is a striking example of the disproof of this old saying. For my part, wherever I have been meeting the Indian expatriate community in Australia, I have been exhorting that they should project themselves and prove that they and their cohorts back in India are dependable business partners.

India and Australia share many common values. We stand for peace, democracy, protection of human rights, and reject any form of discrimination, including racial discrimination. There has been cooperation between Human Rights Commissions of our two countries. This is reflective of how two countries at different stages of development could exchange views and share experiences on issues of common concern and interest to their peoples.

We are, indeed, deeply concerned at the continuing racial discrimination in Fiji. No doubt, there have been developments in Fiji to establish a Constitution acceptable to all communities. But these developments are to be seen in the context of the Indian majority there turning into a minority community.

I know that, right now, there is a groundswell of understanding and support for India's concerns amongst the Australians. Prime Minister John Howard, Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, Foreign Minister Alexander

Downer, President of the Senate, Honourable Margaret Reid and the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Kim Beazley, I am aware, are friends of India. Your Excellency, Honourable Bob Halverson, you have yourself had occasions to meet our parliamentarians in the Conferences of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

With our commonalities, mutuality of interests in the political, economic and cultural spheres and abounding friendship and cordiality, I am confident that an India-Australia axis is bound to be a crucial factor in shaping the future destiny of the world.

With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, I propose a toast to the ever growing partnership between the peoples, the Parliaments and the Governments of Australia and India.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND CROATIA— REINFORCING BILATERAL RELATIONS\*

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I would like to convey my deep gratitude to Your Excellency and to the friendly people of Croatia for the extremely warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to me and the members of my Delegation during our stay in your beautiful capital city, Zagreb.

While we had the pleasure of welcoming Madame Zdravka Basic in India for the IPU Conference in February, my present interaction with the esteemed members of the Croatian Parliament is perhaps the first such bilateral exchange between our two countries. The purpose of my visit to Croatia is not only to consolidate the ties between our two democratic institutions, but also to understand and learn from an exchange of views and experiences with the leaders and people of Croatia.

India and Croatia are not new to each other. Our relations with the Croatian people are deeply rooted in history, and have traditionally been characterized by warmth and goodwill. The Carmelite monk Bartholomeo came to India two centuries ago and spent some time in scholarly pursuits at the court of the Maharaja of Travancore. He also pioneered Indological studies and wrote the first Sanskrit grammar published in the Latin language in Europe in 1790. This marked the beginning of a mutually beneficial relationship, which has grown and strengthened over the years.

Excellency, our bilateral relations have witnessed steady progress over the last few years. We are happy that Croatia chose to open its first mission in South Asia in New Delhi more than two years ago. We have also recently decided to upgrade our mission in Zagreb to Ambassadorial level and the first Indian Ambassador to Croatia is to join shortly. The finalisation of a number of bilateral documents in the recent past, in the fields of culture, air services and maritime transport, is a matter of particular satisfaction to us. We have also recently accorded approval for

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\*At the Luncheon hosted by His Excellency, Mr. Vlatko Pavletic, Chairman of the House of Representatives of Croatia, Zagreb, (4 July, 1997).

a Croatian lecturer to come to India for teaching the Croatian language at the University of Delhi. I am confident that our exchanges at all levels will further intensify in the coming months and years.

In India we have sustained and nurtured strong democratic institutions for almost half a century. The close symbiotic ties between them, as well as the pluralistic character of our society, have led to the building of a vibrant and multi-faceted India. We take pride in being the largest democracy in the world. We have enriched the discipline of parliamentary political science with our own innovative contributions.

We have also embarked, in recent years, on a programme of restructuring our economy with a view to achieving greater integration with the global system. This process has thrown open new opportunities for greater interaction in the economic sphere with other countries. We both must seize this opportunity to forge new ties in areas of mutual interest and thus give a firm foundation and a further fillip to our time tested relationship.

Parliamentary institutions are the focal point of democracies. Representing the will of the people, parliamentarians play a critical role in shaping the destinies of their peoples and their nations. We have always welcomed interaction at the parliamentary level as a means of benefiting from an exchange of views and experience. Contacts between the Indian and Croatian Parliaments are an important dimension of our multi-faceted bilateral ties. We are convinced that continuing exchanges between our parliamentarians will in equal measure reinforce the bonds of friendship and cooperation between us.

Excellency, my Delegation's short sojourn here has given us a glimpse, even if fleeting, into your old and great civilization. My visit has provided me an opportunity to see the beautiful and historic city of Zagreb, for which I would once again like to thank Your Excellency. We also eagerly look forward to visiting Split and the historic city of Dubrovnik. May I take this opportunity to invite Your Excellency to visit India with some of the esteemed members of the Croatian Parliament.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now request you to raise a toast to the health and well-being of His Excellency, Mr. Vlatko Pavletic; to the progress and prosperity of the people of Croatia; and to the long standing friendship between India and Croatia.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND KYRGYZTAN—STRENGTHENING FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING\*

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It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, Mr. Speaker and other distinguished members of your Delegation to India. I am indeed happy that you have been pleased to accept our invitation to visit India and have given us the privilege to have you with us today. In fact, this visit is historic in the sense that it is the first ever visit of a Parliamentary Delegation from Kyrgyztan to India after the emergence of your country as an Independent Republic. Your visit thus is an excellent occasion to strengthen and renew the friendship and understanding between the Parliaments and the peoples of India and the Republic of Kyrgyztan. Although your stay in India is very brief, I hope it will provide you an opportunity at least to get a glimpse of India from close quarters.

Excellencies, India attaches great significance to its relations with all the Central Asian Republics not only because of our historic ties with them, but also due to our common commitment to the ideals of democracy, human rights, secularism and international peace and cooperation. Though it may be the first ever visit by a Kyrgyz Parliamentary Delegation to India, our ties go back several centuries and were cultivated diligently during the days of the former Soviet Union in the recent past. The importance India attaches to its relations with the Kyrgyz Republic is evident from the fact that within a short span, several exchanges between our countries have already taken place, including the visits of your esteemed President and Prime Minister to India in 1992 and 1997. Our Prime Minister and the Vice-President also visited your country in 1995 and 1996. All these exchanges resulted in the signing of many important agreements between our two countries in diverse fields like culture, arts, education, science and technology, tourism and trade. I should also make special mention of our decision according each other the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, apart from the setting up of the Indo-Kyrgyz Joint Commission.

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Parliamentary Delegation from the Republic of Kyrgyztan, led by His Excellency Mr. U.M. Mukambaev, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, New Delhi, (30 July, 1997).

You may recall that both our Prime Minister and the Vice-President had the honour to address your Parliament during their visits to your country. We deem it an honour that a prominent street in your historic capital city Bishkek was named after the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. The opening of a Centre for Gandhian Studies at the University of Bishkek has also been greatly appreciated by the Indian people.

In the background of these developments, we see your visit as yet another milestone in our bilateral relations which would further enrich the bonds of friendship between our two countries, especially at the level of our Parliaments. In the years to come, we visualize tremendous potential for enhanced cooperation in different areas for both the countries.

Excellencies, your visit to India is taking place at a time when we have undertaken economic reforms to achieve faster and a more balanced economic development. I am sure both our countries can be partners in many unexplored areas on the economic front and share the knowledge and experiences gained over the years.

Once again, I welcome you and other members of your Delegation to India and hope that you will carry back with you pleasant memories about India and its people.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now invite you all to join me in a toast to the health, happiness and well being of His Excellency, Mr. U.M. Mukambaev, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Kyrgyz Republic and other members of your Delegation and to the prosperity and well being of our peoples.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND TURKEY—PROMOTING FRIENDLY RELATIONS\*

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Your present visit, Your Excellency, is a kind of double Golden Jubilee for us. The year 1997 marks not merely 50 years of our Independence, but as many years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between us. After the visit of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1960, there was virtually a lull in two-way exchanges at high levels between our countries through to the 1980s. Thereafter, these exchanges have been on the upswing — since the visit to Turkey of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the visit to India thereafter of President Kenan Evren, President Suleyman Demirel and Prime Minister Turgut Ozal. Particularly since 1995, our relations have further strengthened through more frequent exchanges. The present President of India Mr. K.R. Narayanan too visited Turkey in the same year in his capacity as Vice-President.

We in India attach considerable importance to the bilateral relations between our two countries, particularly as Turkey is a bridge between Asia and Europe. Indo-Turkish interactions are centuries' old. Turkish architecture, for example, has its indelible impress on Indian architecture.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk for you is what Mahatma Gandhi is for us, the Father of the Nation. The Mahatma was for Turkish Independence. The Ataturk is known to all students of the history of emergence of nation states. Most in India have been students of this history. The Ataturk lives too in the minds and hearts of the present generation in India. Indeed, we have named one of the roads in New Delhi after him.

Politically we have many similarities. Both of us follow the parliamentary form of Government. Both our countries have been having governance through coalitions and believe in international peace.

Both our countries due to historical or geographical reasons have been Western looking. We need to look to other parts of the world as well in

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Turkish Parliamentary Delegation, led by His Excellency Mustafa Kalemli, Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, New Delhi, (11 August, 1997).

a globalizing world. This has economic as well as cultural implications. We have to solve this dilemma of directional thrusts.

Both our countries are also going through the economic reform process. Turkey has had an early start on this, from about 15 years back. We have commenced our reform process only six years back. World experience shows that the reform process is quite painful. It calls for basic attitudinal changes — for the present to make sacrifices to secure the welfare of the future; the immediate social dimensions of reform have to be addressed. We should share our experiences in this regard.

Indo-Turkish relations have generally been free of stresses and strains. Whatever be the problems as between nations, we are living in times when politics should be put on the back-burner, economics being given precedence to ensure the betterment of our people.

The present level of trade between our two countries is only around \$300 million. There is immense scope for its enhancement, considering the present buoyancy of growth at 20 per cent per annum. The Indo-Turkish Joint Business Council has been doing fruitful work in this regard. Promotion of investments and technology transfer would require significant improvement apart from that of trade. In order to enhance the profile of our people in each other's country, the culture of our countries has to be projected mutually.

Distance generates a sense of enigma, mystery and curiosity, leading often to friendship. But proximity leads to familiarity which, in turn, leads often to mutual apprehensions. So, in international relations, consciously developed friendly relations with neighbours become important. This is exactly what we have been trying to do through the efforts in the SAARC and through direct bilateral interactions with our South Asian neighbours, including Pakistan. Special efforts have been mounted in this direction by our present Gujral Government. We shall deeply appreciate Turkish understanding of these efforts.

There is a significant convergence of regional strategic interests of India and the Central Asian Republics. We are building synergies with these Republics. We are watching with keen interest, the developments in the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) which is vital for promoting multilateral cooperation with Central Asia. We recognise that Turkey has a vital role to play in this Organisation.

Both India and Turkey are member-states of several multilateral organisations at the international level. We could take common positions on issues of common concern for us. That will help further reinforce our bilateral relationship.

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Inter-parliamentary exchange of Delegations between our two countries has to be frequent. That alone can help develop the underlying political endorsement to inter-Government level decisions and agreements.

For more realistic and continuous appreciation and understanding of the problems and positions of our two countries, there need to be Legislators' Groups in our Parliaments. I understand that an India Friendship Group has already been formed in the Turkish Parliament. I shall take the initiative of forming a counterpart Group in our Parliament.

Your Excellency, it is our bad luck that all the members of your Parliament who had initially planned to visit India in this Delegation have not been able to make it. I hope not long later, there will be a bigger Delegation for a longer duration to India.

With these words, I have great pleasure in welcoming you and your Delegation to India. I wish you and your Delegation a very pleasant stay. I hope too that you would carry back home memories to cherish.

Let me also propose a toast to the welfare and prosperity of Your Excellency, the members of your Delegation, the people, the Parliament and the Government of Turkey.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND U.K.—AN ABIDING FRIENDSHIP\*

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I have great pleasure in welcoming you in our midst on this occasion when we are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. It is very gracious of you to have found time to associate yourself with this moment in our history.

Your presence is symbolic of the deep appreciation of India's parliamentary democracy by the British House of Commons and, through it, by the British people. We value this appreciation.

It is a matter of historical coincidence that the British Labour Party which gave us deliverance from dependence in 1947 is in Office in your country now, when we are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our Independence.

Right now, an empathetic Britain has made independent India, 50 years old, a lively media event, the electronic Media being replete with programmes on India's history, politics, economy, culture and society. This is rather unique and we shall cherish this upswell of British peoples' feelings for India.

You have been an India-lover. When you came to India in 1994, while delivering the Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant Memorial Lecture, you referred to three great occasions of enormous drama and potential for good which had impressed you most—and one of these was the Independence of India. You stressed, and I quote "...half a century later, our traditional friendship, fringed as it was with nostalgia and with resentment has been overtaken by a modern partnership between sovereign democracies".

Indeed, before Independence, our people and our leaders underwent trials and tribulations, but when Independence did come, transfer of power was without rancour or recrimination. And, this was in no small measure due to the enlightened leadership of the Father of our Nation, Mahatma

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Speaker, House of Commons, U.K., Her Excellency Rt. Hon. Madam Betty Boothroyd, New Delhi, (13 August, 1997).

Gandhi who professed and practised non-violence and to the modern outlook of our first generation leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and his political colleagues, not to speak of the scores of other great sons and daughters of our soil who were freedom fighters of great integrity and values and who represented the very best in the ethos of Indian culture.

We have adopted the British system of parliamentary democracy. Explaining the rationale of adoption of parliamentary democracy in India, Jawaharlal Nehru had not failed to observe that the Indian version of the system was "adjusted to the new conditions and new surroundings". We have fitted it into the vastly federal polity of our country and practised it with quite a good measure of success.

It was John Locke, the famous British political philosopher, during the period of the Glorious Revolution in the Seventeenth Century when parliamentary supremacy was established in U.K., who said that human beings have basic natural rights: to property, life, liberty and personal security; that Government created by society to protect these rights must fulfil its mission, failing which the people have the right to resist. This philosophy finds its articulation in the Indian Constitution as a feature of its basic structure.

We have put our history behind us and our cordiality has blossomed into cooperation in multifarious ways: our Commonwealth camaraderie extends to areas of technical cooperation; at the inter-parliamentary level, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association helps us compare notes on political experiences and share the same; even very recently the House of Commons entertained a Parliamentary Delegation on "Standards in Public Life"; as we strive to maintain and strengthen national unity and integrity through the development of Hindi and other Indian languages, English continues as our link language within and outside India; indeed, famous English authors of India have emerged in the literary world; British technology is an integral part of Indian industry; value added products of India of international quality find their way into the British market on a daily basis; there are Indians too among the stock of British professionals and technocrats; cricket is a binding force between us in the sports world; while Shakespeare is being played and replayed in India, Indian artistes find recognition quite frequently in the Albert Hall at London; and above all else, people of Indian origin constitute about one per cent of British population.

Your Excellency, you would recall that when I met you in U.K., in February, 1997, I referred to the Indo-British initiative of 1993 which has given quite a significant boost to our bilateral trade to the level of

2600 million pounds and to the buoyancy of British investments in India. I am confident that Indo-British economic cooperation is bound to strengthen further in the future to our mutual advantage and prosperity.

Let me also again recall with gratitude, British support on the Indo-UK Extradition Treaty and Confiscation Agreement of 1992 which is our common instrument to deal with the menace of international terrorism.

On behalf of the people, Parliament and Government of India, I have immense pleasure in conveying our deep appreciation of the touching care and tender attention given to us by the British people, the House of Commons and Government on this Golden Jubilee of our Independence.

Thank you once again for your visit.

With these words, let me propose a hearty toast to Her Excellency Rt. Hon'ble Betty Boothroyd, Speaker of the House of Commons. Long live Indo-British friendship.

Vande Mataram.

Jai Hind.

## INDIA AND BULGARIA—WIDENING CULTURAL INTERACTION\*

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I am honoured and privileged to be in this Centre for Eastern Languages and Cultures.

We are at the threshold of the 21st century. If we look back at twenty centuries of human history, we would be amazed at the cruelty that human beings have been inflicting on one another. Wars, colonization, exploitation, religious persecution, genocides, terrorism, etc. have been very recurrent. The 20th century, particularly, has been a period of great savagery and spilling of blood. In its 50th year of existence, one of the subjects on which the United Nations has had to be preoccupied is human rights protection. Humanity is thirsting for peace and security more than ever before.

Universities, centres of learning and intellectuals have a great role to play in shaping the human mind towards international peace and security and in helping to establish a humane International Social Order. The best in the cultures of different nations would need to be researched and synthesized and this very synthesis should impact on communication between the peoples of the world.

It is in this light that I see the importance of this Centre, as evident from its mandate—that is, Eastern Languages and Cultures. People all over the world, including in India, have been looking more to the West than to the East. Quite a few of the greatest civilizations of the world thrived in the East. The grandeur of these civilizations has been the very essence, if I can put it like that, of Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*. I heartily felicitate the East Orientation of this Centre.

India is a mini world. Her population consists of six ethnic groups and as many groups of languages of communication. In fact, over 1600 languages are spoken. India is also the abode of great religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism.

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\*At the Centre for Eastern Languages and Cultures, Sofia, (6 October, 1997).

I am aware that Bulgaria has evinced very keen interest in Indian culture. Rabindranath Tagore visited Bulgaria in 1926. The Indian epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Panchatantra* have been popular here. Modern Indian authors like Prem Chand, Mulk Raj Anand and Amrita Pritam have also engaged the interest of Bulgaria. Some of the Bulgarian poets like Hristo Botev, Hristo Smyrenski and Nikolo Vaptsorarov have been widely translated in Indian languages.

Cultural cross-pollination needs to be a continuous process. That is why we have institutionalized this process by establishing the Indo-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement as early as 1963. Within the framework of this Agreement, thirteen Cultural Exchange Programmes have been implemented. The current Cultural Exchange Programme provides for exchanges of scholars, artistes, journalists and academicians. It also envisages cooperation in the area of education and archaeology and implementation of UNESCO programmes in each other's country. One of the highlights of our cultural interaction has been the strengthening of the Indology Department in the Sofia University and the Bulgarian Studies Programme in Delhi and Jamia Millia Islamia Universities.

I understand that the Bulgarian scholars, journalists and diplomats are making contributions to a book entitled *India in My Heart* in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, which is indeed a gracious gesture.

The route to peace and understanding is the Heart. The route to the Heart is language which is the means of communication. And, language is a vital means of articulating cultures.

I wish this Centre for Eastern Languages and Cultures glorious years of success in its mission. Long live Indo-Bulgarian cooperation.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND THAILAND—AGE-OLD TIES\*

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Let me first express my deep appreciation for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended by you to me and my Parliamentary Delegation from India.

We are very pleased to be in your beautiful country and amidst your lovely people.

It is a matter of happy coincidence that for our two countries, these are Golden Jubilee times. Last year we organised a Festival of India in Thailand to join you in your celebration of the Jubilee of His Majesty the King's Accession to Throne. The Thais held a Festival of Thailand in India two months back and commemorated the Golden Jubilee of our Independence and establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

Relations between India and Thailand date back to at least over 2000 years. Our affinities are founded on history, geography, religion, culture and language. Geographically, we are proximate. Migration of Ahoms to India is a historical fact. Buddhism, Sanskrit, Pali and epics such as the *Ramayana* are eternal in Indo-Thai linkages.

During this Golden Jubilee Year of our Independence, we recall with nostalgia the assistance extended to our Independence Movement by enabling Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to seek support for the Indian National Army here. It was from Bangkok that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose travelled to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands where in December 1943, for the first time, the Indian National Flag was unfurled on Indian territory.

With the end of the Cold War, the artificial obstacles in our relationship have ceased to exist. Since the eighties, our bilateral political relationship has got transformed into one of ever increasing cordiality as signified by top level exchanges. The visits of Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and

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\*At the Banquet hosted by His Excellency, Mr. Wanmuhammadnoor Matha, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Bangkok, (6 November, 1997).

Narasimha Rao to Thailand and of Her Royal Highness Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and General Chatichai Choonhavan to India during this period are memorable in our histories.

On the regional front, we are pleased that we have been accepted as a Full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN. It is of particular satisfaction that this decision was made at the ASEAN Summit held in Bangkok in December 1995. While we thank all the members of ASEAN for this, we are particularly appreciative of the strong support extended by Thailand. We are also now a member of the ARF. We were happy to participate in the ASEAN PMC and ARF meetings in 1996 and earlier this year in Kuala Lumpur. We attach great importance to this relationship with ASEAN.

We are also delighted that Thailand has consciously added a 'Look West' dimension to its foreign policy. A concrete manifestation of Thailand's 'Look West' policy is the Thai initiative for the establishment of a sub-regional economic cooperation grouping linking South-East Asia and South Asia for the first time. I refer to BIMST-EC which was officially inaugurated in Bangkok on June 6 this year. This brings together Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Relations between India and Thailand are expanding quite satisfactorily in all fields. Our bilateral trade is growing steadily. Investments have begun to flow in both directions. Science and technology, environment, space, atomic energy, agriculture, fisheries, etc. are areas where we could learn from each other's experiences. It would be useful for us to review prospects and to explore further ways to ensure meaningful and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Regular exchanges of visits by Parliamentary Delegations from both India and Thailand have been of great significance and educational value for both our countries and I hope that such exchanges will be regular and systematic in future. It is through steady bilateral and regional cooperation that we can face, with self respect, the challenges of global political and economic forces.

Your Excellency, we are deeply touched by the special efforts you have taken to make us feel at home, including through cultural programmes, despite your current preoccupations and concerns.

May I now invite all the distinguished guests to join me in a toast for the development of further friendship and cooperation between India and Thailand and for the health and prosperity of the peoples of our two countries.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND THAILAND—SHARED PERCEPTIONS\*

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We have had five delightful days of stay in your beautiful country. Let me express my deep appreciation for the warm hospitality extended to me and my Parliamentary Delegation from India by the National Assembly, the Government and the people of Thailand.

We have had the privilege of meeting all the important leaders here during our stay. I had the special honour of getting an audience with His Majesty the King. The way we have been given time by all who matter in Thailand without any reservations despite your current economic and political problems is a very moving experience for me and my Delegation. I am sure that this is a special honour done to my country.

Our separate interactions with you, Your Excellency, apart from the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Prime Minister and the Thai parliamentarians have given us significant understanding of your vibrant political life.

Thanks to your openness and your readiness to share your experiences with us, we have also had the opportunity of travelling around in the Nakhon Pathom and Chonburi Provinces. During this travel, I was mentally taken back to many parts of India which are similar—with the same kind of vegetation, agriculture, business and industrial activities. The strength of our peoples is their hard working nature, their native intelligence, their close-knit families, their faith in the Supreme Being and above all else their indomitable spirit which helps them face and overcome any crisis.

We may have ups and downs in our economic life. But being basically nations of farmers and people with the qualities which I have just now mentioned, we can never lose out to any force in the world—even to aggressive economic forces.

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\*At the Dinner hosted by His Excellency, Mr. Arsa Meksawan, First Vice-President of the Senate of Thailand, Bangkok, (8 November, 1997).

At the bilateral and multilateral levels, India and Thailand are already cooperating significantly. Thanks to the steady support from Thailand, India is already in the process of regional integration with the ASEAN. India has also come to have a place in the ARF. Our bilateral relations should be strongly complemented by our efforts as partners in developmental cooperation in the region. In trade and commerce and industry and investment, we need not be mere competitors; we can be partners.

Being developing countries, we should learn from each other's experiences in our struggle for development. For the purpose, apart from exchange of Delegations between our Governments and Parliaments, there needs to be exchange of our academics, students, innovative farmers, master craftsmen and managers of economy. This would help in exchange of diverse skills and expertise and promotion of solidarity amongst our peoples.

The factor that has most impressed me about the lives of the Thais is that while they are generally Buddhists by faith, the Hindu culture is also manifest everywhere. The tolerance that is spontaneously demonstrated by the Thais at the societal level is also the basic characteristic of the people of India. If we build upon the commonalities of the peoples of our two countries, the centuries-old cordiality between us is bound to remain eternal.

Let me conclude, Your Excellency, expressing my deep gratitude once again for the incredible hospitality extended to us. I am looking forward to a Parliamentary Delegation from Thailand to India and it shall be my turn and pleasure to expose this Delegation to my country, my people and their life styles.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND RUSSIA—MULTI-FACETED RELATIONS\*

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This year, His Excellency Gennady Seleznev is fifty years of age and is going on fifty-one. Let us wish him glorious times to come.

I recall with nostalgia the very meaningful programme that the State Duma had so hospitably organised last year when I led a Parliamentary Delegation to the beautiful country that the Russian Federation is.

It is now my privilege to extend to Hon'ble Seleznev and to his distinguished Delegation which is of a very senior level, a very warm and hearty welcome on behalf of the people and Parliament of India. Though the sojourn of the Delegation in India is going to be short, we shall spare no effort to make it fruitful, interesting and enjoyable.

India and Russia share a relationship of warm friendship and close cooperation based on continuity and trust. During the fifty years of diplomatic cooperation, our relations have reached maturity and turned into strategic partnership. This has been achieved in fairly complicated international conditions. Our friendship has survived the test of time and our bonds have strengthened further with every passing year. Indeed, our relationship is even emotional, transcending mere political and economic considerations.

Our bilateral relations are multi-faceted and encompass cooperation in a wide range of areas such as political, economic, commercial, defence, scientific, technological, educational, cultural and other fields. They have not only proved mutually beneficial but have also contributed significantly to creating conditions conducive to peace and prosperity in the world.

Excellency, the need for friendly Indo-Russian relations is recognised by all political parties in India and is a matter of national consensus, irrespective of changes of Government. Regular political contacts between

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Russian Parliamentary Delegation, led by His Excellency Mr. Gennady N. Seleznev, Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, New Delhi, (24 November, 1997).

our countries have not only facilitated exchange of views on various international issues but also enabled us to work on our joint approaches to the new order taking shape in the world. It is heartening that our political contacts are being supplemented by parliamentary exchanges. I gathered, during my interactions with the Russian Delegation this morning that there has been a parliamentary hearing in Russia on the future of our bilateral relations in the perspective of the 21st century and that the strategic relationship between our two countries has been reconfirmed. This is a matter of further encouragement for us. We are also grateful to the stand of the Russian Federation that India should have its rightful place in the Security Council of the United Nations.

We, in India, have watched the democratic reforms and the transition to market economy in your country with great interest. These choices are evocative of the similar choices in favour of democracy and political pluralism which we, in India, made when we attained Independence. These changes have brought our countries even closer in terms of our basic values and orientation.

Economic and commercial ties are rightly considered to be an important aspect for strengthening mutual relations. It is encouraging that the Indo-Russian trade has increased to \$2 billion over the past two years. But this is still nowhere near the potential of the size and stature of our countries and we expect to take measures for increasing it further to a more impressive level. The Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission has emerged as the principal instrument for monitoring, facilitating and furthering the economic cooperation between our two countries. We hope that its Fourth Session to be held in New Delhi will help identify newer areas of our cooperation in the fields of trade and economy, science and technology and culture.

India and Russia are both pluralistic societies characterized by diversities of culture, religion and language. We value these diversities and regard them as a source of strength. Yet, the destabilising forces of political extremism, religious chauvinism and international terrorism pose a challenge to our polity which has set an example of 'unity in diversity'. The Moscow Declaration on the Protection of Interests of Pluralistic States, signed in June, 1994, draws attention to the dangers posed by these forces, not only to the unity and territorial integrity of pluralistic States like India and Russia, but also to regional and international security and stability as a whole. We look forward to further deepening our cooperation in our joint struggle against such destabilizing forces.

We also look forward now to the visit to India of His Excellency Mr. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, in January, 1998.

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Before I conclude, I would like to mention that as a student I was greatly impressed by the short story of Leo Tolstoy entitled "How much land does a man need". This story reflects the essence of what the world understands as socialism. It is the basis of the philosophy and culture of the Russians and the Indians. Long live Indo-Russian friendship.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now request you to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency Mr. Gennady N. Seleznev and members of the Russian Parliamentary Delegation, to the prosperity of the peoples of India and Russia and to the ever growing friendship between our two countries.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND IRAQ—EXPLORING NEW VISTAS\*

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On behalf of the people and Parliament of India, and on my own behalf, I have great pleasure in heartily welcoming the Iraqi Parliamentary Delegation to India. The visit of the Delegation is especially significant as it takes place in the Golden Jubilee Year of India's Independence. Your Excellency, I am sure that this visit will provide you with an opportunity to see for yourselves the achievements we have made in the last five decades. You may also be pleased to have a first hand feel of the political developments as they would unfold, perhaps even before you leave India, in our democratic polity.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the friendship between India and Iraq has gained maturity over the years. Since times immemorial, the two civilizations that flourished in the basins of rivers Indus and Ganges on the one hand and the Tigris and Euphrates on the other hand have had much in common. The direct and deep cultural and trade relations that started between the Indians and the Arabs after the rise of Islam and the establishment of the Abbassid Caliphate in Iraq, have continued and, indeed, diversified in modern times. The identification of our interests in terms of the fight against colonialism has further consolidated our friendship.

India has all along been championing the cause of disarmament, international peace and development. We have been trying to impress upon the international community the need to establish a democratic international order that is truly multilateral and non-discriminatory which takes into account the growing inter-dependence and mutuality of interests among nations, while ensuring the fullest respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States. We remain committed to the pursuit of global nuclear disarmament which is comprehensive, non-discriminatory and time-bound. We believe that Governments and peoples, even while having different ideological orientations, can cooperate and work together in the interest of world peace and development.

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Iraqi Parliamentary Delegation, led by His Excellency Dr. Sa'adoon Hamadi, Speaker of the National Assembly of Iraq, New Delhi, (1 December, 1997).

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India and Iraq, as two developing nations, should increase their interactions to promote the interests of the third world countries. We both have marched shoulder to shoulder in the Non-Aligned Movement. Together, we share a commonality of approach on several regional and international issues. In the emerging world scenario, there is an urgent need to reinforce this relationship.

Peace and stability in the Gulf is of considerable importance for us. Any development which affects peace and stability in the area is logically a source of concern for us. We stand for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries in the area.

We are deeply concerned about the developments in your region and share the economic hardships faced by the people of Iraq. We are against military solution to any problem as in the ultimate analysis it is the ordinary people who suffer the most. We do hope that a peaceful and lasting solution will be found to the crisis that has affected the Gulf region.

Needless to say, we believe in the worth of purposive human endeavour. The policy of economic liberalization pursued by India has thrown up opportunities for wider economic cooperation between India and Iraq. India has been an active participant in the economic development of Iraq and we strongly believe that there is enormous scope for diversifying the areas of cooperation. We have a huge pool of skilled and qualified manpower which can play a constructive role in the development of Iraq. In this context, I recall visits to India by the Health Ministry, Railways, Agricultural and Oil Ministry Delegations last year and this year. The Memorandum of Cooperation signed by the Iraqi side with the Indian Railways last year has been particularly significant. We have also been regular participants in the Babylon International Festival for the last five years. Further, we have resumed participation in the Baghdad International Fair from this year. I understand that the Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs in charge of Gulf Affairs would be visiting Iraq shortly. We wish to reactivate the Indo-Iraq Joint Commission.

In the consolidation of the forces of world peace, development and international understanding, a very crucial role can, and has to be, played by peoples' representatives in different countries. Exchange of Parliamentary Delegations would bring together peoples' representatives and promote amongst them mutual understanding and cooperation in this endeavour of consolidation.

Your Excellency, I believe that the visit of yourself and your Parliamentary Delegation has opened a new chapter of cooperation between our two countries and we look forward to the continuance of exchanges.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with these words, may I request you to join me in a toast to the health of His Excellency Dr. Sa'adoon Hamadi, other members of the Iraqi Parliamentary Delegation, to the health and prosperity of the people of Iraq and to the friendship between our two countries and peoples.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND TURKMENISTAN— STRENGTHENING BILATERAL RELATIONS\*

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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. Your visit, being the first ever by a Parliamentary Delegation from Turkmenistan, adds a new dimension to the existing bilateral relations between our countries. Therefore, we attach special importance to this visit.

India has traditional ties of friendship and cooperation with Turkmenistan. Notwithstanding the geographical distance, there exists a cultural affinity between our peoples. Even during the Bronze Age, there have been interactions between the cities of the Indus Valley and settlements in Turkmenistan. The spread of Buddhism to Central Asia from the 5th to the 8th centuries brought the peoples of our areas together. Turkmenistan was situated on the Great Silk Route. Emperor Akbar's tutor was a Turkman, the famous Bairam Khan. Although Turkmenistan is a young State, it is a rich reservoir of ancient culture and civilization. Courage, diligence, straightforwardness, self-respect, respect for elders and women and hospitality are some of the best traditions of the people of Turkmenistan. We, in India, also value these traditions and regard them as a source of strength. Tolerance and moderation, the bed-rock of a democratic polity, constitute the chord that runs through the democratic polity of our two countries.

India and Turkmenistan are committed to the cause of world peace, disarmament and a new and just international economic order. Both our countries believe in stability and harmonious development. We share a convergence of outlook on many regional and global issues. The menace of terrorism in all forms is one such issue and we denounce it. We deeply

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\*At the Banquet hosted in honour of the Turkmenistan Parliamentary Delegation, led by His Excellency Mr. Muradov Sahat, Chairman of the Majlis of Turkmenistan, New Delhi, (10 December, 1997).

appreciate your policy of positive neutrality and your position with regard to India's unity and territorial integrity. Our views regarding the need to stand steadfast against external interference in the internal affairs of any country are identical.

We, in India, have watched the resurgence of your polity and economy with great interest. The bold and imaginative economic reforms undertaken by your country have started paying dividends and the country is now on the path of economic growth and prosperity. We have also introduced far-reaching economic reforms in consonance with the trend the world over.

It is heartening to note that along with the excellent political ties, there has been significant cooperation in the economic, commercial, scientific and technological fields between our two countries. Turkmenistan offers to India a gateway to Central Asia. The Trilateral Agreement signed between India, Iran and Turkmenistan, I am sure, will open up greater opportunities for multilateral trade in the region. The Agreement on avoidance of double taxation signed by India and Turkmenistan constitutes yet another major step to promote relations between our two countries. The Agreement will provide a fresh impetus to the flow of investment, technology, trade and services between India and Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan is very rich in natural resources, particularly in oil and natural gas. Her economy is marked by a high degree of specialisation, food products being imported. Her international trade is impacted by this characteristic. India has considerable expertise in the development of transportation infrastructure, particularly railways, roads, gas pipelines, etc. We can bring into operation the complementarities that naturally exist between our two countries for our mutual benefit.

To further intensify our bilateral relations, our countries have also signed separate Protocols on cooperation in the fields of culture, arts, education, mass media, sports, health and medicine. These Protocols amply testify to the growing friendship between our countries and peoples and many of them have significant implications for human resource development.

Excellency, exchange of visits between two countries always contributes a great deal towards strengthening the friendship and goodwill between them. Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru himself visited Ashgabat as early as 1955 accompanied by Indira Gandhi. His Excellency President Niyazov visited India in 1992 as well as earlier this year. There have been

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exchange of visits at other high levels as well. Now your visit marks a significant commencement of parliamentary exchange. I am sure this will further deepen our mutual understanding.

May I now request you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency Mr. Muradov Sahat, and the distinguished members of the Turkmenistan Parliamentary Delegation, to the prosperity of the peoples of Turkmenistan and India and to the ever growing friendship and cooperation between our two countries.

Thank you.

## INDIA AND PANAMA—STRENGTHENING BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP\*

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I am pleased to associate myself with this function organised by the Embassy of Panama for honouring the "Rogelio Sinan Contest".

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once observed that though vast distances separate India and Latin America, "in the geography of mind, we are close to each other". It is our minds that need to be conditioned to break geographical distances. How do we do this? It is through direct contacts between the peoples of the world. If we don't break these geographical distances, through direct contacts at the peoples' level, India would remain for the Latins a mysterious land of snakes, elephants and myths and the Latins may be thought of by Indians as just a people of Carnivals, Calypso, Samba and Tango.

I am a strong believer in people-to-people cooperation. While promotion of international relations through Government channels are important by themselves, they are conditioned by geo-political and diplomatic considerations. I believe that our world would be a far better place to live in, if there are direct contacts as between peoples. Socio-economic problems faced by people all over the world have strong commonalities. Each society handles such problems in terms of its own genius. There are commonalities too in the thinking process and cultural development of people living in different geographical areas. Exchange of experiences, ideas, values and knowledge of cultures will bring peoples together and make them humane and enlightened so that the world would be free of tensions and violence which we experience everywhere today.

These exchanges need to be facilitated as between intellectuals, scholars, litterateurs and not merely as between Government functionaries and business people. It is in this perspective that I look at the Rogelio Sinan Contest.

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\*At the prize distribution ceremony in the "Rogelio Sinan Contest", New Delhi, (10 December, 1997).

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Language is the means of communication. Each language has been enriched by the writings and works of great minds of the world. If the citizens of the world live in linguistic cocoons and remain a mere Tower of Babel, they would be an ignorant lot. Peoples across the world should learn different languages. Even if this is not given to all, great works of the world should also be translated into major languages so that cultural contacts and understanding are facilitated across geographical and linguistic boundaries.

Latin America in general, including Panama, have had a colonial past like India has had. We have had to triumph through trials and tribulations to assert our Independence. These were great sagas of sacrifice of our great men and women.

In India, we do have some degree of efforts at the University and post-University levels to learn the Spanish language. Spanish being one of the great languages of the world, I would urge that the level and extent of the learning of this language should become significant. Sanskrit, Hindi and several other Indian languages are being learnt in different parts of the world at the University and even school levels in foreign countries. The Indian Constitution refers to the development of the composite culture of India through the enrichment of different Indian languages. I would extend this concept and call for our composite culture being enriched even by the systematic learning of foreign languages.

Rogelio Sinan came to India as a diplomat, as Panama's Consul with base in Calcutta. The writer and poet that he was by his own right, he turned out to be Panama's cultural Ambassador to India. He travelled extensively in India and gained deep insight into the multi-faceted life of our people — painting, music, theatre, sculpture, architecture and above all our Independence Movement under Mahatma Gandhi. He was deeply impacted by Rabindranath Tagore's works and our great Epics, the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, apart from *Panchatantra* stories. These insights and impacts translated, in due course, into cross-cultural creative works of Rogelio. About India, Rogelio observed, I quote:

India has always been modern and ancient. Her surprising social transformation is unbelievable. The multiple progress achieved for the well-being of man, especially in the modernisation of agriculture and nutrition, deserve the highest praise; but I still believe that India should not lose the essential characteristics which have made her known as an unmistakable ethnological reality.

The subject of the contest this year in the special category has been Omar Torrijos Herrera. He dominated the political life of Panama for 13 years since 1968. He was a pragmatic nationalist. He strengthened business to secure a sound economy, introduced land reforms to ensure equity, developed infrastructure and got USA to surrender sovereignty over the Panama Canal Zone in terms of the Torrijos-Carter Treaty of 1977. Two years from hence, Panama will take over the Canal.

I compliment the Embassy of Panama and Her Excellency Mirta in having organised this function which would help in fostering friendship and creating awareness amongst the peoples' of India and Panama about each other's culture. I congratulate the winners of the Rogelio Sinan Contest. Long live India-Panama friendship.

Thank you one and all.

## INDIA AND BULGARIA— GROWING FRIENDSHIP\*

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I have immense pleasure in extending a very warm welcome to Your Excellency and to the members of your distinguished Delegation. Your visit to India during this Golden Jubilee Year of India's Independence and around Christmas time of the year makes it a matter of great joy for us.

On this occasion, I recall my recent successful visit to Bulgaria during which I was accompanied by a multi-party Parliamentary Delegation from India. We carry fond memories of that visit to your beautiful country.

Indo-Bulgarian relations are ancient. They date back to the Kushan period of India's history, *i.e.* the first century after Christ. Our diplomatic relations were established in 1954. The architects of our relationship have been Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and principally, late Smt. Indira Gandhi. Smt. Gandhi observed that the Indo-Bulgarian relations "go beyond the purely utilitarian".

During this year, there have been ministerial level visits to Bulgaria from the Ministries of Commerce and External Affairs. This reflects the importance assigned by India to the strengthening of the bilateral relationship between our two countries. The visit of the Foreign Policy Secretary of His Excellency President Stoyanov to India has also been very fruitful. Now we look forward with great interest to receiving your Foreign Minister as well as President Stoyanov himself next year. We are confident that these forthcoming visits are going to be landmarks in our growing friendship.

We recall with gratitude the support extended by Bulgaria to India's successful candidature for the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations as well as the Executive Board of the UNESCO. Today, in the

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\*At the Banquet in honour of the Bulgarian Parliamentary Delegation, led by His Excellency Mr. Yordan Sokolov, Chairman, National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, New Delhi, (18 December, 1997).

changed international environment, it is imperative that the United Nations and other world bodies are transformed in tune with the times and made more representative and democratic in their structures and functioning. Bulgaria's support for India's legitimate claim to permanent membership of the U.N. Security Council would further strengthen and enhance the mutually beneficial relationship of cordiality that we have developed over the years by significantly impacting on Indian public opinion and political community.

The phase of liberalisation through which our two countries are passing holds out enormous opportunities for economic and commercial cooperation to mutual benefit. We can cooperate through joint ventures, especially in the areas of power, pharmaceuticals and textiles. We, in India, over the years, have developed significant capabilities in building up infrastructure. And, we can participate in Bulgaria's infrastructural development competitively and on terms very beneficial to Bulgaria.

We deeply appreciate the status and goodwill that Indian culture enjoys in Bulgaria. When I visited the Indira Gandhi School at Sofia along with my Parliamentary Delegation, we felt very touched about the manner in which the memory of Indira Gandhi and Indian freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh are cherished by the Bulgarians. We also harbour very warm sentiments about the culture of Bulgaria. We should meaningfully follow up on the recently concluded bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme.

Your 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 her people.

Wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now invite you to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of His Excellency Mr. Yordan Sokolov and other distinguished members of his Delegation and to the ever growing friendship and cooperation between our peoples.

Thank you.



The Sangmas with His Holiness, Pope John Paul II



With HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand



With the Governor-General of Australia, HE Sir William Deane



With the President of China, HE Mr. Jiang Zemin



With the President of Greece, HE Mr. Konstantinos Stefanopoulos



With the President of Israel, HE Mr. Ezer Weizman



With the President of Mauritius, HE Mr. Cassam Uteem



With the President of Mongolia, HE Mr. Natsagiyn Bagabandi



With the President of Namibia, HE Dr. Sam Nujoma



With the President of the State of Palestine, HE Mr. Yasser Arafat



With the President of Philippines, HE Mr. Fidel Ramos



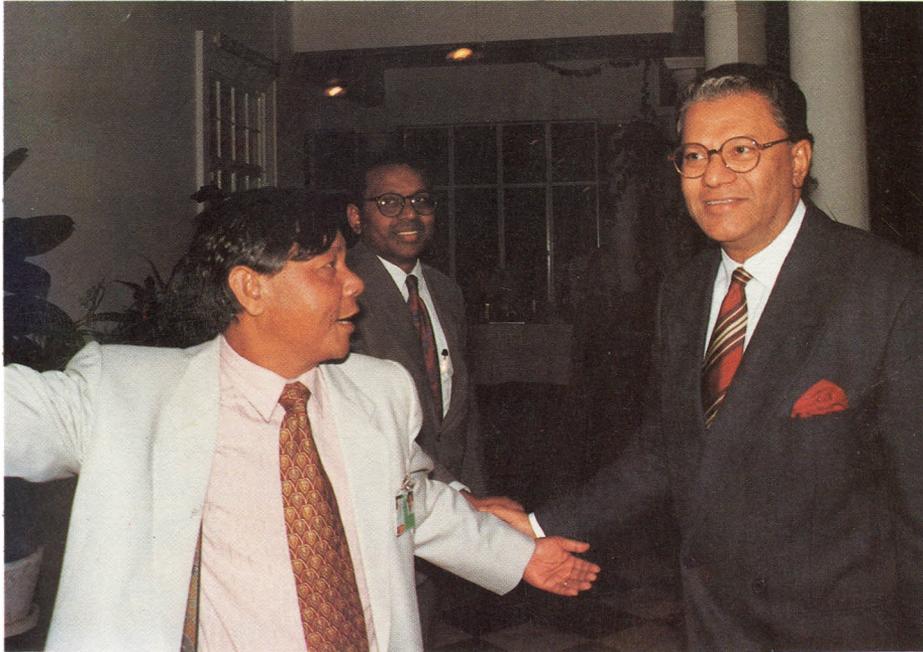
With the President of Poland, HE Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski



With the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, HE Sheikh Hasina



With the Prime Minister of Belgium, HE Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene



With the Prime Minister of Mauritius, HE Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam



With the Prime Minister of Pakistan, HE Mr. Nawaz Sharif



With the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, HE Mr. Abdullah Ibn Abd Al-Aziz As-Sa'ud



With the US Secretary of State, HE Ms. Madeleine Albright



With the former President of Iceland, HE Mrs. Vigdis Finnbogadottir



With the former Prime Minister of Japan, HE Mr. Morihiro Hosokawa



With the Chairman of the National Assembly of Armenia,  
HE Mr. Babken Ararktsian



With the Chairman of the National Assembly of Bulgaria,  
HE Mr. Yordan Sokolov



With the Chairman of the Supreme Peoples Assembly of the Democratic Peoples  
Republic of Korea, HE Mr. Yang Hyong Sop



With the Speaker of the Peoples Assembly of Egypt,  
HE Dr. Ahmad Fathy Sorour



With the Speaker of the Parliament of Finland, HE Ms. Riitta Uosukainen



With the Speaker of the Majlis of Iran, HE Mr. Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri



With the Speaker of the National Assembly of Iraq,  
HE Dr. Sa'adoon Hamadi



With the Speaker of the Irish Dail, HE Mr. Sean Treacy



With the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya,  
HE Mr. Francis Ole Kaparo



With the Vice-President of the Kuwaiti Inter-Parliamentary Group and Member of the National Assembly of Kuwait, HE Mr. Mubarak B. Al-Khurainij



With the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Kyrgyztan,  
HE Mr. U.M. Mukambaev



With the Speaker of the National Assembly of Mauritius,  
HE Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall



With the Chairman of the State Great Hural of Mongolia,  
HE Mr. R. Gonchigdarj and the Indian Ambassador in  
Mongolia, His Holiness Kushak Bakula



With the Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation,  
HE Mr. Gennady N. Seleznev



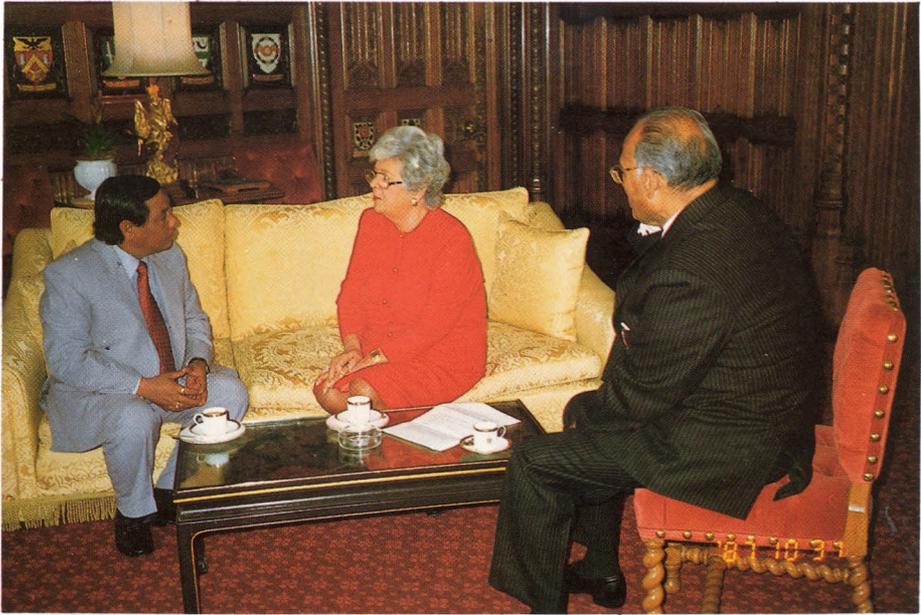
With the Chairman of the Majlis-Al-Shoura of Saudi Arabia,  
HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Ibrahim bin Jubair



With the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly,  
HE Mr. Mustafa Kalemli



With the visiting Parliamentary Delegation from Turkmenistan



With the Speaker of the British House of Commons,  
Her Excellency Rt. Hon. Ms. Betty Boothroyd



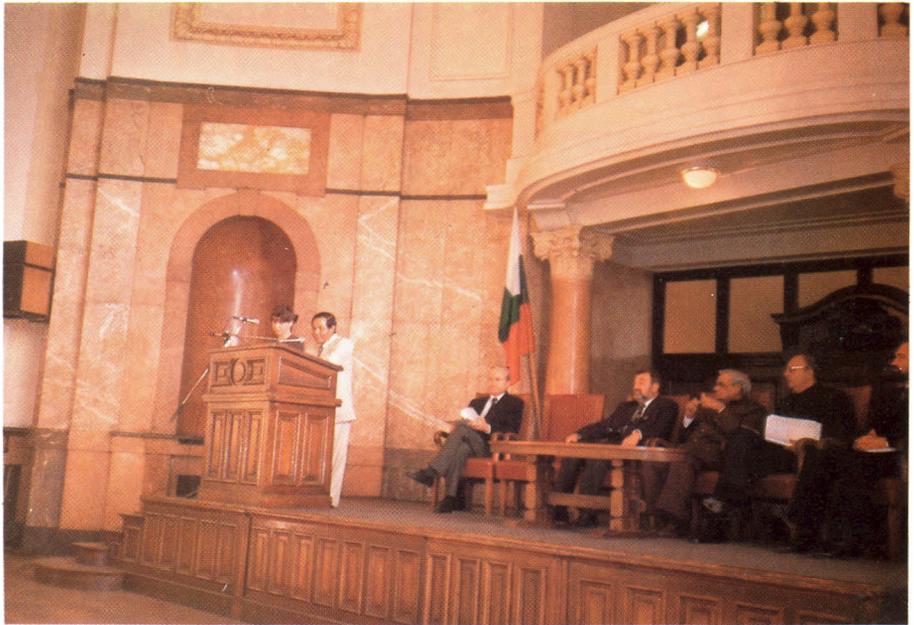
With the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku



With the President of the World Bank, Mr. James Wolfensohn



With the Chairman of the ASEAN New Delhi Committee and High Commissioner of Singapore in New Delhi, Mr. Omg Keng Yong



Addressing the Faculty and students in the University of Sofia, Bulgaria



At the Indira Gandhi School in Sofia, Bulgaria; also seen in the picture is the then Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee



At the Vocational Institute in Ulan Bator, Mongolia

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MISCELLANY

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## ORISSA—A PROUD HISTORY\*

I feel honoured in having been called upon to address you in this Special Session of the Orissa Legislative Assembly convened in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of our Independence.

Before I start my address, let me pay my homage to late Shri Biju Patnaik, one of the builders of modern Orissa and who added enormous dignity to the Eleventh Lok Sabha.

Standing before you, I am mentally taken back in time into centuries of the proud history of Orissa. It was in this part of India, in ancient Kalinga, that Ashoka the Conqueror was transformed into Ashoka the Compassionate. This was the heroic land of the Gangas who brought Kalinga, Kengoda, Utkala and Kosala together and ushered therein a brilliant epoch in which the Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri and the Sun Temple in Konark were built. Early in history, the political life of the people of this area was marked by *Ganatantra* or the Republican form. Their *Sanghas* of that period were but Parliaments.

The people of Orissa were second to none in their contribution to our country's freedom struggle. In the movements for Swadeshi, Non-Cooperation, Poorna Swaraj and Quit India, there was participation by many stalwarts from Orissa. Madhusudan Das, Gopabandhu Das, Niranjana Pattanaik, Hare Krishna Mahatab, Nityananda Kanungo and Naba Krishna Choudhury were but a few in the galaxy of the great sons of Orissa who struggled for our freedom. Let us pay tributes on this occasion to the memories of these great leaders.

Freedom struggle inspired the Praja Mandal Movement. Indeed, the struggle and the Movement went side by side and leaders were also common. Non-violence and Civil Disobedience marked the Praja Mandal Movement. Thanks to the sacrifices of leaders like Kailash Chandra Mohanty, Pavitra Mohan Pradhan and Hare Krishna Mahatab himself, all the princely States of Orissa, more than a score of them, merged with the State of Orissa in August, 1949, thus integrating into the Indian Union.

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\*At the Special Session of the Orissa Legislative Assembly convened to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, Bhubaneswar, (17 November, 1997).

The political, economic and social status of today's Orissa has to be seen juxtaposed with this glorious history of the Oriyas and the greatness of the ideals of their leaders.

There have been eleven Assembly elections so far commencing from 1952 in the State. Popular rule in the State has been interrupted by several spells of President's rule. Mostly, popular Governments have also remained in Office only for significantly lesser than five years. Like in other parts of India, political life in Orissa too has been characterised by internal dissensions and groups in parties, impact of personality factors, etc. Economic development being a function of political stability, the people of Orissa may like to analyse the impact of frequent political changes on their economic development. This may help them strive for more harmonious political life and work out modalities of getting on with the business of socio-economic development, irrespective of political changes.

An important factor of political life in most States of India is sub-regional politics. Due to historical, geographical, social and economic reasons, differences are caused between different parts of the same State and this is what contributes to sub-regional politics. My impression is that the State of Orissa also has had to face this problem, for example as between western Orissa and coastal Orissa. Sub-regional aspirations have to be duly taken into account in our political life. Aggrieved sub-regions will have to be involved in the sharing of political power as well as gains of economic development.

Political defections also have had their impact on Orissa politics as in other parts of India. There have been defections in the Assemblies of 1952, 1957, 1961, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1977, 1980, etc. These defections have had implications for several political parties, the Congress, the Ganatantra Parishad, the Jana Congress, the Utkal Congress, etc. The latest development in our country is a strong reaction against defections altogether, including within the limits of the anti-defection law. The very rationale of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution has been questioned, on ethical grounds amongst others. The matter is being examined in detail as part of a detailed study on electoral reforms.

Orissa has had her share of coalition politics as well because of the multi-party system. The coalitions of the Congress and the Ganatantra Parishad in 1959, the Swatantra and Jana Congress in 1967 and of the Utkal Congress, the Swatantra and the Jharkhand in 1971 are well known. Coalitions in our country break more often due to personality factors than on account of genuine ideological differences. This has been true of Orissa

as well. Hung Legislatures are becoming more and more frequent everywhere. In order to ensure stability in governance, mechanisms for harmonisation of the interests of coalition partners and for conflict resolution between them have to be perfected and personality factors should be eschewed or relegated to the background.

Though quite a few women of Orissa participated in the freedom struggle like Malati Choudhury, Rama Devi, Sarala Devi, Annapurna Maharana, et al and even tribal women fought against the British, participation of women in politics in the State since Independence has been rather minimal as reflected in the Legislative Assemblies since 1952. After the Fourth U.N. World Conference on Women, the demand has been not merely for empowerment of women but for provision of access to women to positions of political power as well in partnership with men. Of course, the 81st Constitutional Amendment has been introduced in the Parliament. This continues to be a matter of debate. Irrespective of the outcome of this legislative initiative pending before the Parliament, on their own the political parties should make it a part of their culture and working style to provide decision-making positions to women in partnership with men, whether it be in parties or in governance.

The crisis of politics in our country today is the crisis of leadership. All over the world, Universities have always supplied thinkers and intellectuals with aptitude for political team work and leadership. Without interfering with academic life of the students in Universities, they need to be exposed to the principles and practice of politics, to our Constitution and to our parliamentary institutions. This measure alone, in the long run, can help development of proper leadership for political life and for fair and good governance.

The State of Orissa is rich in natural resources, including mineral resources. Having a coastal front with the Bay of Bengal and estuarian lakes like the Chilka, the State is rich in marine food resources. It is also the land of mighty rivers — the Mahanadi, the Brahmani and Baitarani. Being in the tropical zone, a wide variety of food and commercial crops are produced. In fact, Orissa contributes one-tenth of the rice production of the country. Major hydel and thermal power projects have come under implementation and over 30 Public Sector Undertakings have been established, not to speak of the promotion of a significant number of large, medium and small industries.

However, the picture of Orissa presented by human development indices should cause serious concern to development planners and managers. Orissa is the eleventh most populous State in the country with

a population of about 32 million; the growth rate of population is about two per cent; sex ratio is 972 females per 1000 men; total fertility rate is high at 3.30; nearly 70 per cent of births are attended by untrained attendants; infant mortality rate is high at 118 and 101 per thousand for males and females; literacy is below national average at 49 per cent and that amongst the women is only 35 per cent; about half a million children are labouring in work places while they should be in schools; monthly per capita expenditure is Rs. 149 in rural areas and Rs. 247 in urban areas; only 76 per cent of the households in rural areas get two meals a day; life expectancy is only 54 years as against the national average of 61 years; and incidence of poverty is one of the highest in the State, 49 per cent living below the poverty line as against the average of about 36 per cent for the whole of India.

The overall status of human development covering all these areas, especially restraining the growth of population within economically sustainable levels and poverty alleviation, I would appeal, may be seriously debated in this Session as a matter of high priority.

The Special Session of the Parliament held from the 26th August to 1st September, 1997 unanimously adopted a Resolution setting out an agenda for India in terms of ensuring transparency, probity and accountability in public life; ridding our polity of criminalisation or its influence; orderly conduct of business in the Legislature; making education relevant to the world of work; universalisation of elementary education; efficient use of national resources; development of infrastructure; generation of wealth as a sustainable means of achieving full, freely chosen and productive employment and of ensuring equity and social justice; balanced regional development; special emphasis on provision of minimum needs of the people — that is, food, nutrition and health security, potable water, sanitation and shelter — and protection of environment and bio-diversity. I would appeal to all of you to keep in view this Resolution into which enormous thinking has gone in on the part of all the parliamentarians and adopt a similar Resolution so that it will serve as a basis for uplifting the naturally rich and beautiful State of Orissa into one of the foremost States of the country.

I wish this Special Session all success. Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## FREEDOM FIGHTERS—A CONSTANT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION\*

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Shortly, we will be celebrating 50 years of our Independence. The best way to pay homage to the departed freedom fighters and to felicitate those freedom fighters the present generation has the fortune of having amidst them, is to live and work for their ideals.

The freedom fighters fought for our political independence. Political independence, in turn, is the foundation for our economic independence. We can achieve economic independence only by becoming self-sufficient in every field and by generating surpluses indispensable for survival in a globalising and competitive world.

Mahatma Gandhi and the freedom fighters believed, and rightly so, that our nation draws its strength from our villages; the khadi and village industries movement actually started by Mahatma Gandhi is, in fact, a very sound and practicable economic strategy. It provides work for the villagers — the blacksmiths, the handloom weavers, the carpenters, the leather workers, etc. — in their places of habitation.

The economic strategy handed down to us by the Father of the Nation and the freedom fighters should be further strengthened; this can be done by modernising the processes of production in the villages. Modern technologies appropriate to rural development should be put in possession of the village artisans. This will help in enhancing their productivity and in reducing their monotony in workplaces. Marketing bridges should be built between the villages and urban areas. If the rural economy is strengthened this way, rural folk will get remunerative jobs in their places of habitation and all the ills of in-country migration from rural to urban areas can be wiped out.

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\*At the function to felicitate freedom fighters, New Delhi, (6 October, 1996).

Our freedom fighters also believed in *Ram Rajya* — that is local self-government. It has taken more than 4 decades for us, since Independence, to establish Panchayati Raj on a constitutionally mandatory basis through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Now, the States have to take follow-up action by enacting laws and vesting Panchayati Raj Institutions with power, authority, responsibility and resources.

Our freedom fighters stood for national unity and integrity. It required the collective acumen of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and thousands of unknown warriors of our freedom movement to forge national unity bringing together old British principalities and princely states. We cannot afford to lose this great patrimony of national unity; we would need to realise its value and not squander it like prodigal children.

How do we preserve national unity? Again, only by living according to the ideals of our freedom fighters:

- By professing and practising secularism.
- By respecting regional aspirations in a constitutional way.
- By bringing about balanced regional development in the economy.
- By establishing an equitable social order.
- By inculcating amongst the rich, the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi that they hold wealth in trust for the benefit of the have-nots as well.

Education is the foundation for development in every sphere of life. Mahatma Gandhi believed in the rejuvenation of the village schools which, he thought, had been destroyed by the British colonial system of Government in India. He believed in a system of education in which recipients of knowledge will gain all-round development by the head, the hands and the soul coming together. We have not had a greater educationist than Mahatma Gandhi who advocated basic education, which would create a dignified and productive work culture? We should re-adjust our educational system based on the Mahatma's concepts.

The working people of India should also develop a productive work culture; this should be encouraged by the captains of industry by setting an example in terms of an enlightened management culture which will be characterised by values of non-exploitation, sharing of gains and service to community.

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Probity and integrity in public life is a basic value which has been handed down to us by our freedom fighters and first generation leaders. We should learn never to regress from this value.

Our womenfolk are 50 per cent of our population. We have had great women leaders. Our religions have deified women; but in practice, discrimination against women of an incredible order continues. We should wipe out discrimination against women by legislative as well as developmental actions.

Our children are our future. Our Constitution and laws provide for protection of children. Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday is observed as children's day, but child exploitation continues. This should be terminated; otherwise, we cannot secure our future.

The freedom fighters who are assembled here are indeed a source of constant inspiration for all of us. They remind us of their sacrifices living amidst us. It is ultimately the light that they shed on our path that can lead our great nation to heights of human glory.

Thank you.

## SOMNATH CHATTERJEE—AN OUTSTANDING PARLIAMENTARIAN\*

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It is a matter of great honour and pride for me to be associated with this solemn function to confer on Shri Somnath Chatterjee, the "Outstanding Parliamentarian Award 1996" of the Indian Parliamentary Group (IPG).

Inwardly, I have always assigned to Shri Somnath Chatterjee the status of my *Guru*. In 1977, I was a member of the Parliamentary Committee on Subordinate Legislation headed by him. In this capacity, I also travelled around with him in the North-East. He made me feel that just being with him was education and assimilating his ideas was intellectual elevation.

Public service as parliamentarian and legal practice as professional are matters of family tradition for Shri Somnath Chatterjee. His father late Shri N.C. Chatterjee had also served our nation as member of Parliament and had practised law in the Apex Court of India as Shri Somnathji does now.

Though Shri Somnath Chatterjee has had an aristocratic lineage and Western education, including for being a barrister, he embraced Communism for his political faith and has been a steadfast practising communist for about three decades.

When Shri Somnath Chatterjee joined us in the Eleventh Lok Sabha, it was for the seventh time that he was returned to this House. This at once speaks volumes for his image amongst his electors, his standing in his party and his stature as a parliamentarian and a national leader.

Shri Somnath Chatterjee, throughout his parliamentary career, was also naturally sought after on account of his expertise to be Chairman and member of many Committees. He served with distinction as Chairman of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation as well as Committee of Privileges. He was also a Member of several Joint Committees and Select Committees,

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\*At the function to confer the Indian Parliamentary Group's "Outstanding Parliamentarian Award 1996", on Shri Somnath Chatterjee, M.P., New Delhi, (19 March, 1997).

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particularly ones requiring expertise in law. As a barrister and as a senior lawyer, he brought his legal acumen to bear, with considerable impact, on shaping legislation in a diversity of areas — areas of corporate, fiscal and commercial laws and constitutional and criminal laws. His enlightened advice was also available to the Ministries of Law, Finance and Home, in the Parliamentary Consultative Committees of which he has had occasions to serve. His earlier service as Chairman of the Departmentally Related Standing Committee on Railways and his service currently as Chairman of the Committee on Communications, has helped in balanced and constructive scrutiny of the performance of these Ministries.

The Government of West Bengal have also understandably secured, over the years, the benefit of his Chairmanship in several State Public Sector Corporations.

His debating skill will turn any legislator green with jealousy. His depth of subject knowledge, the diction and propriety of his vocabulary and elegant humour of his presentation, as I have often seen from the Presiding Officer's Chair, almost invariably make his political opponents speechless and helpless.

When Shri Somnath Chatterjee is on his legs, he demonstrates an incredible awareness of national and international issues, simply by emoting from his experience. I was closely following his statement on the floor of the House, on the 25th of February 1997, on the Motion of Thanks to the President for his Address. In the sweep of his statement, he effortlessly traversed a wide-ranging ground — the rationale of governance through coalition, separation of powers, federalism, secularism, liberalism, national integration, macro and micro-economics, employment situation, poverty alleviation, welfare administration, regional development and South Asian regional issues.

Trade unionism is natural to Bengalis. Combining in himself his Bengali moorings, Syndicalism which he should have imbibed during his youthful days as barrister and Marxian dialectics as a practising communist, he has been an inevitable leader of the working class. He has been giving mature leadership to several major trade unions in West Bengal. I am also aware that he is now doing his best to harmonise working class aspirations with the dictates of a globalising and liberalising world.

Nor is Shri Somnath Chatterjee confined to the world of politics, Parliament, law and the working class. In the State of West Bengal and at the national level, he is associated — as President or Member — with a significant number of organisations rendering service in the areas of civil liberties, academics, arts and sports. This profile is that of a resplendant humanist.

Shri Somnath Chatterjee's performance in the Conferences of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) have always had stunning impact on the international audience. Last year, I had the privilege of getting his support on human rights issues in the IPU Conference in Beijing. As the Rapporteur on the Committee on Human Rights, his contribution to harmonising a plethora of amendments from several countries for hammering out a Resolution on Human Rights was widely complimented.

In terms of conformity to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of the Business of the House, and of protecting the collective dignity of the House, and dignity of the individual parliamentarians, he is a copy-book model.

The towering personality which Shri Somnath Chatterjee is, literally and figuratively, by accepting the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award of the Indian Parliamentary Group for the year 1996, he is indeed honouring every one of us in the Parliament, even as he is being honoured. He fulfils every parameter stipulated for nomination of parliamentarians for this Award. I heartily felicitate him. I wish him long years of public service to the people of his constituency, to West Bengal, to the Parliament and the people of India and to the international community of parliamentarians.

Thank you for your attention.

Jai Hind.

## MEWA RAM ARYA—A DEDICATED LEGISLATOR\*

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I feel honoured that I have been invited to this function to give away the Best Legislator Award of the Delhi Legislative Assembly for the year 1995, to Shri Mewa Ram Aryaji. He has been in politics for more than thirty years. I gather from his political career-graph that from the very beginning he was attracted to the political ideals of some of the great sons of India. Early in political life, he was a worker of the Swatantra Party. As all of you would know, the Swatantra Party founded during the days of Jawaharlal Nehru, by late Shri C. Rajagopalachari, the veteran freedom fighter, voiced a dissident political faith. It stood for conservatism, a strong agricultural base, strengthening of domestic industries, promotion of khadi and village industries in particular, and basic education, *i.e.* the Gandhian concept of *Buniyadi Shiksha*.

I do not need to educate the audience here regarding what Jayaprakash Narayan and his Movement stood for. Suffice it to say that J.P. stood for probity in public life and civil liberties. Shri Arya also participated in the J.P. Movement.

The mere fact that Shri Arya has been exposed to, and trained in, the schools of thought of these great leaders should bring home to us his basic values.

Shri Mewa Ramji, having been Metropolitan Councillor, has had a sound grounding in the governance of Delhi, which is possibly the most cosmopolitan territory of India. Indeed, Delhi is a mini-Bharat and the mere exposure to its governance would vest one with a national outlook, apart from sensitising one to a wide range of special human problems involved in urban management — those concerning in-country migration, habitat and environment, urban poverty alleviation, public distribution system, infrastructure administration connected with transport, water and power supply, etc. I am sure that Shri Arya is a veteran in respect of all these matters in his former capacity as Metropolitan Councillor and in his present capacity as a member of the Vidhan Sabha.

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\*At the function to confer the Delhi Legislative Assembly's "Best Legislator of the Year Award 1995", on Shri Mewa Ram Arya, New Delhi, (20 March, 1997).

Shri Arya is also reputed as a man of the masses, always spearheading mass movements.

Being a journalist by his academic background, Shri Arya, I have no doubt, is an expert in striking appropriate interfaces with the people on the one hand and those in positions of power on the other. Journalists are the eyes and ears of the general public, majority of which is mostly mute. They are also the mirror reflecting the image of those in positions of power to the common man. The impression I have gathered about Shri Arya is that he combines in himself all the attributes of a professional journalist in his style of working.

I know that the Awards Committee would have gone into the totality of Shri Arya's personality, only facets of which I have attempted to project. I understand that the Committee has gone into the contributions of Shri Arya to the business and the dignity of the Vidhan Sabha, apart from enriching its proceedings.

A political saying goes that a politician wears three hats — the first one, he puts it in the ring; the second one, he talks through it; and the third one from which he always pulls out something. The career-graph of Shri Arya shows that he has been putting his first hat in the ring of electoral contests, only to win. The decision of the Awards Committee shows that he doesn't wear the second hat. I am sure, by repeatedly wearing the third hat, because of his reputation as a mass leader, he would always pull out of it some magic or the other to keep the people of the National Capital Territory of Delhi always happy.

I wish Shri Mewa Ram Arya very many more years of success in his service to the people of Delhi, the mini-Bharat. I heartily congratulate him. I have immense pleasure in giving away to him the Delhi Legislative Assembly's Best Legislator Award for the year 1995.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.

**PANDIT BALDEV UPADHYAY—  
A LIFE-TIME DEVOTION TO SANSKRIT\***

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We are assembled here today to honour a luminary and Sanskrit scholar, Pandit Baldev Upadhyay of Varanasi. By honouring Pandit Baldev Upadhyayji, we are honouring our history, our culture, our philosophical, scientific and artistic tradition. I say so because Sanskrit language has been extraordinarily rich in all these respects. It is an ancient language, the history of which could be traced to 3500 years back, *i.e.* 1500 B.C. The four Vedas, the Vedangas and the Upanishads are indeed the foundations of Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit has been the medium through the ages for several sciences — life sciences, mathematics, astronomy, etc. It has been the medium too for epics like *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. It is in this language ancient poetry, romantic prose, lyrics, dramas, fables and fairy tales flourished.

Sanskrit symbolises international friendship as well as national unity. It is to be seen as a language of international friendship because, in terms of religion, philosophy, art and civilisation, it spread over what we today understand as Central, South-East and East Asia. Most European languages in the West bear close affinity to Sanskrit so much so that they have come to be known as the Indo-European group of languages. Winternitz, the famous author of the *History of Indian Literature*, referring to Sanskrit, European culture and thought said, "If we wish to learn to understand the beginnings of our own culture, if we wish to understand the oldest Indo-European culture, we must go to India, where the oldest literature of an Indo-European people is preserved".

The framers of our Constitution clearly understood the primacy of Sanskrit when they formulated Article 351. The Directive envisaged in Article 351 as regards development of Hindi language is that it should be promoted to serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India. For the purpose, the Article calls for enrichment of Hindi by assimilation of the forms, style and expressions in Hindustani and the languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule. There are 18 languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule, including Sanskrit. Article 351 reflects Sanskrit as the linguistic anchor for our country's unity.

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\*At the function organised by the Kund Kund Bharti to honour Pandit Baldev Upadhyay by conferring on him the "Acharya Umaswamy Puraskar", New Delhi, (9 May, 1997).

Over the years, we have established Sanskrit Universities and Departments of Sanskrit in various Universities and colleges. Concurrently, we have established other National Language Institutions as well—the Central Institute of Modern Indian Languages in Mysore, the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad, etc. Only recently, a law has been enacted for the establishment of a Hindi University. The Department of Education in the Ministry of Human Resource Development also provides grants-in-aid for promoting teaching and learning in Sanskrit through time honoured teacher-student tradition — the *Guru-Shishya* tradition.

From West Bengal to Gujarat and from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, there are several institutions of Sanskrit learning, many of which were once upon a time throbbing with life. We should identify these institutions and provide them substantial financial support for their rejuvenation.

Of late, considerable lot of work is being done on Vedic mathematics. It is the finding of experts in Sanskrit language and mathematical scientists that the richness of Vedic mathematics should be investigated. Research efforts in this area should be promoted by sustained financial and infrastructure support.

It is also the finding of computer specialists that Sanskrit as a language and, in its contents, holds out immense potential for computerised operations. This again is a field in which resource and infrastructure support should be given to Sanskrit scholars and computer specialists.

A significant part of styles in Sanskrit language and literature are still handed down the generations hereditarily. Scholars who are repositories of these styles are becoming smaller and smaller in numbers. It is necessary to preserve these styles and traditions for posterity. Already a beginning has been made in this respect by audio recording of Vedic renderings by scholars.

Acharya Umaswamy, the great Digambar Jain by faith, is part of our history and culture. He has gained immortality in our rock inscriptions. Sanskrit was his medium for scripting Jain philosophical works. The Kund Kund Bharti Trust is keeping the memory of Umaswamy alive by its patronage to Sanskrit. My felicitations to Kund Kund Bharti.

Pandit Baldev Upadhyay, a nonagenarian, richly deserves the Umaswamy Award, going by his lifetime dedication to the cause of Sanskrit and the prolific works that he has turned out in Sanskrit. I would request Pandit Upadhyayji to bless all those present here, including me, to dedicate ourselves directly or indirectly to the cause of Sanskrit language in the years to come. I also pray to God that Panditji should become a centenarian and live for many more years and help us by his works to find enlightenment through the medium of Sanskrit language.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## K.R. NARAYANAN—A MULTI-FACETED LEADER\*

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I have had several occasions over the last couple of weeks to watch the presentation of Shri Narayanan's life and times on the electronic Media. It was moving. It brought out that democracy as a way of life is far superior to any other way. It brought out too that the civilisation, culture and maturity ingrained in our people will not ultimately fail to seek out merit where it is. Your ascendancy is due to your scholarship, accomplishments, values and qualities of mind and heart. Let me congratulate you again formally on this occasion.

Sir, the quality of your choice for the Presidency is significant. You scored 95 per cent of the votes when the size of the electoral college has come to be almost double of what it was at the time of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, our first President. This is indeed a record. The choice was virtually unanimous.

Some people chase offices. The entire nation chases some others for entrustment of offices. You belong to the latter category. This is what gives the confidence that our polity is bound to be safe in your care.

I noticed that your low profile response to the Media about your election was typical of your style. For you, it has been another Office though, no doubt, the highest. For us, you are just THE President.

You have been a teacher and you would command respect; you have been a journalist and you would seek out the truth; you have been a professional diplomat, you are known to the world, the East and the West and you would resolve conflicts and manage crises.

Sir, permit me also to claim personal affinity with you. Smt. Usha Narayanan is the next door neighbour of myself and my people, Burma and Meghalaya being geographically contiguous.

Entering upon Office as President in this Golden Jubilee Year of our Independence, I am sure you would carry our country into a golden age in the 21st century. Wish you every success. God bless you.

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\*At the farewell given to Shri K.R. Narayanan, outgoing Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, New Delhi, (23 July, 1997).

## THE YOUTH—TORCH-BEARERS OF TOMORROW\*

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Tomorrow's world belongs to the youth of today. For this reason and also for the reason that at least mentally, I have not yet shed my youth, I readily agreed to participate in the inaugural of this important Workshop on translating United Nation's commitment to the empowerment of the youth jointly organised by the United Nations Information Centre and the Consortium of Indian Scientists for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations has been having the issues of the youth high on its agenda for over three decades. In fact, the United Nations has believed that the prime route to establishment of lasting peace in the world is mobilisation and channelisation of youth power for development and understanding between communities, within nations and between nations in the world. And, this was the theme of the International Youth Year, 1985. A decade has passed by since then. About a year back, the UN Assembly has adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

The youth constitute nearly 20 per cent of world population, majority of them living in developing countries. They are over a billion strong. In our country, they are nearly 30 per cent of the population. They are invaluable human resource. They have to be involved participatively in the developmental process so as to bring about social transformation to make the world safe for peace and prosperity even as we enter the next millennium.

From the days of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, we have had a tradition of involving the youth in community development. Nonetheless, like never before, the need of the day is to project certain basic national concerns. These concerns are :

- Democratic values.
- Peace.
- Human Rights education.

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\*At the Workshop on the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, New Delhi, (21 March, 1997).

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- Gender justice.
  - Prevention and termination of violence and terrorism.
  - Secularism and communal amity.
  - National unity and integrity.
  - Population education.
  - Literacy.
  - Environment protection.

Many of these concerns do stand built into the National Core Curriculum under the National Policy on Education. But, in our country, we have a huge stock of those who don't enter the world of education or are drop-outs from the educational system. It is for the fortunate youth who are in the world of education to play the lead role and function as communication agents amongst their unfortunate brethren, the uneducated youth as well as others.

In bringing home many of these basic national concerns to the people, the problem faced is hardened, and diehard social attitudes which are handed down the generations, as it were. Governmental action from above for the purposes of changing these attitudes may not be effective by itself. A lot of grassroot level activity by non-governmental agencies and local people themselves individually and collectively is needed. The youth hailing from particular areas can work amongst their own people, carrying messages in regard to these concerns — that adoption of the small family norm is beneficial for the economic and social well-being of the families; that people should use only safe drinking water; that environmental sanitation is vital for sound health; that provision of immunisation and nutrition to children is vital for their normal growth and for the development of their cognitive capabilities; that the girl child is as precious as the male child; that drug addiction is lethal; that violence and terrorism are disruptive of societal cohesion; and that environment protection is vital for the developmental process to be sustainable — are all messages which are more convincingly and effectively carried to the people by the local sons of the soil. In this context, the youth, particularly the educated, enlightened and trained ones can function as resource persons filling the gap between the governmental machinery and the people.

We, in our country, are not really short of financial resources to implement development programmes. Where we fail is in management of the people. Nor can we, with financial resources, buy the minds and attitudes of the people. For these programmes to succeed, the youth could even undertake monitoring activities. College students, for example, can adopt villages or habitations for the purpose of monitoring progress of projects for immunization, nutrition, family welfare, environment protection, etc.

Students of many collegiate and professional educational institutions like polytechnics, agricultural, engineering and medical colleges at under-graduate and post-graduate levels can even extend their activities as part and parcel of their "practicals" in their educational courses, and provide service to the people in the areas of their own competence. Medical students can render service in the areas of family welfare methods or generating AIDS awareness. Students of polytechnics can impart technical skills in simple civil construction. Students of agricultural technology can impart skills in scientific methods of cultivation, etc.

In the Indian system of education, already there are certain programmes like those under the National Service Scheme (NSS) for involvement of students who also do undertake activities of this nature. This involvement needs to be systematised. Often it is optional. As I mentioned earlier, such involvement can be made part and parcel of the pedagogy for the teachers and course curricula for the students. This is an aspect to be looked into by the educationists and educational administrators.

The problem of education in our country is that significant part of it is not relevant to the world of work. Our educational courses should be employment oriented. Finding that the skills to operate computers in English as well as local languages are simple, in my former capacity as Union Minister of Labour, I investigated the possibilities of introduction of mobile computer education facilities to the urban and rural youth. A private computer education institution of India even made a presentation before me. As part of this presentation, some school boys from villages demonstrated their skills in computer operations. This is a highly potential area. The youth of our country could be involved in this, Government and non-governmental agencies providing the financial resources and infrastructure for implementing a scheme of this nature.

I have mentioned about skill orientation of our education system, because I am aware that the educated youth without skills are unemployed and the unemployed youth get socially and economically excluded. They are the most inflammable material in our country and may provide the ideal breeding ground for anti-social activities, drug addiction, violence and terrorism.

From conception to cremation, women of our society are the most discriminated lot. Equality of sexes and gender equity and justice are factors which need to become an integral part of our social attitudes. The youth particularly should imbibe these values.

Our developmental process and every activity that we take should be sustainable, whether it is in the area of agriculture, industries, or employment

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or protection of environment. For the purpose, we should ensure the utilisation of our natural, financial and human resources in a productive way. Unproductive investments and employment, and drawing upon our natural resources in a non-renewable way, will not lead to generation of wealth, which is vital for distributive justice itself to be sustainable. The youth of our country who will now, and in the future, be associated with and involved in the processes of production have to become sensitised and conscientised to the truths and message of sustainable development. In this context, I see much significance in the association of the Consortium of Indian Scientists for Sustainable Development with this Workshop. This organisation itself is reputed for its innovative implementation of the famous Pushkar project for sustainable regeneration of degraded lands in the Ajmer lake valley's ecosystem. This project has also been reportedly complimented by the World Bank, United Nations Environment Programme and foreign Universities. The youth of our country would need to be increasingly involved in programmes of this nature.

One of the most unconscionable and pernicious practices obtained in our society is child labour. Children are the youth of tomorrow. It is for today's youth as well to mobilise themselves and carry a crusade against this practice at every level of our society.

The country needs a competent cadre of political managers as well. A transparent democracy as we are, economic development and distributive justice require political decision-makers of a high calibre. Our first generation leaders sacrificed their youth, in fact their whole lives, for our Independence as well as for the establishment of an equitable social order. Such leaders are needed today as well to maintain our Independence economically and otherwise. It is in the hands of the youth themselves, when they become members of political parties, to make contributions to the shaping of their ideologies and policies, in terms of emphasis on all basic national concerns. Later, as they become legislators and decision-makers in Government, they can play the role of statesmen and raise the image of our country and the strength of our economy at par with those of developed nations.

I am sure that this Workshop will go into the modalities of realising the objectives of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. I also hope that the implementation of the Programme would also be sustained. I felicitate the U.N. Information Centre and the Consortium of Indian Scientists for Sustainable Development for organising this Workshop.

Thank you for attention.

Jai Hind.

## VISWAKARMAS—ARCHITECTS OF THE UNIVERSE\*

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I feel honoured that I have been invited for this Second National Viswakarma Representatives Convention.

India is a beautiful mosaic of highly gifted and skilled communities. Viswakarmas are one amongst them. The term Viswakarma, literally translated, means "Architect of the Universe". The creativity of all of you assembled here is to be traced to the great qualities attributed in our Vedas, Puranas and epics to the first Viswakarma whose descendants you are by lineage.

In *Rig Veda*, Viswakarma has been personified as a creator with super-human energy and as a symbol of sacrifice. There is a story that once he offered all his creations in a general sacrifice (*yagna*) and finally offered himself in sacrifice too. He is credited to have designed mighty palaces to deities like Indra. *Ramayana* has it that Viswakarma's son Nala was commissioned by Lord Rama for building the bridge to Lanka for crossing the ocean. In *Mahabharata*, Viswakarma is stated to have built the magical vehicle *Pushpaka Vimana* of Kubera, the Lord of Wealth. In *Devi Mahatmya*, he is said to have designed exquisite jewellery for Goddess Chandrika — earrings, bracelets, necklaces, rings studded with gems, anklets and several weapons of the armoury.

Today, in our country's population, the Viswakarmas are said to be about 2 crore strong. They are dispersed in many States in the north, south, east and west.

True to your legendary traditions, you have been carrying your professional and technical skills down the ages — as jewellers and skilled artisans, particularly in wood-working.

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\*At the Second National Viswakarma Representatives Convention, New Delhi, (2 October, 1996).

Illiteracy, lack of skills and consequent unemployment are some of the very serious problems faced by our people. The root cause of these problems is that our educational system is not skill-oriented. The system has to be vocation-based. Because of our value system, vocational education has come to be treated as poor man's education. Mahatma Gandhi wanted vocationalised basic education (*Buniyadi Shiksha*) to be imparted. But his dream has not materialised even after 50 years of Independence. People still prefer general education, leading only to ordinary degrees. Countries like Germany and Japan, which were almost destroyed during the Second World War, have become leading nations of the world today because of their vocational and skill-based education. Many countries in South-East Asia and East Asia are quickly readjusting their educational system such that it is relevant to the world of work.

I understand that your Maha Sangh is doing a lot of work in the area of education, through collective self-help. Well-to-do members of your Maha Sangh, I gather, make voluntary contributions, create a corpus fund and give scholarships for your children to impart professional education so that they can become engineers, doctors and technocrats. This is an excellent example for other communities of India to follow. Your model of community development reflects self-reliance, sound financial management and investment in meaningful human capital development. This model is sustainable. I would appeal to you to continue to learn your traditional skills, perfect them further, modernise them and hand them down to future generations. You should take care to give special attention to the education of your girl children and development of your women who are the future mothers. I can assure you that the mother-centred model of development will be the most sustainable as may be seen with matriarchal and matrilineal societies of our country.

I have been travelling around extensively in every State of our country and also abroad. We, in our country and in Asia, have a lot to learn from one another in diversifying our skills because we have an amazing variety of traditional skills. More importantly, the skill absorption capacity of our people is second to none in the world. Recognising this, when I visited China as Union Labour Minister, I entered into an India-China Memorandum of Understanding for bilateral cooperation, including in the area of skill exchange. There should be frequent exchange of skills, artisans, technicians and professionals between State and State in India and between India and other countries, particularly the Asian countries.

Jewellery manufacture and wood-working, in which the Viswakarmas are highly skilled, are areas which have immense export potential. As many of you may know, our jewellery exports are of the order of Rs. 12,500 crore. Your Maha Sangh could specially concentrate in these areas. That would help the country earn valuable foreign exchange, apart from the members of the Maha Sangh getting gainful employment.

The Government of India and the State Governments have come to recognise Non-Governmental Organisations as vital institutions to bring about social and economic development as they function at grassroot levels. Liberal project-based Government funding is provided to them for working in the areas of their own competence — education, rural development, etc. The Viswakarma Maha Sangh, being a major Non-Governmental Organisation with its own developmental experience and capability, can participate in projects for national development.

Today, we have amidst us, Dr. G.K. Viswakarma, formerly Director-General, Health Services, Government of India. He is an artisan by his own right in the true Viswakarma tradition. The difference with him is that he shows his skills in setting right the human body. Members of your Maha Sangh can draw inspiration from him as indeed from several other successful members of the Sangh who, I am sure, are present here and are making their own quiet, but significant contributions to the building of our nation.

I wish all success for this Convention and I am sure that each one of you, like the Viswakarma of the Vedas, the Puranas and the epics will perform as an architect in building up a modern India.

Jai Hind.

## SHIROMANI AWARDS—HONOURING OUTSTANDING CITIZENS\*

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I am honoured to be here at this function today. Assembled amidst us are men of excellence, those who symbolize the basic values of our national life the promotion of which is the objective of the Shiromani Institute.

I congratulate the recipients of the 1996 Shiromani Awards. They also deserve special compliments in that they have been chosen for receiving the Awards in the year of the Golden Jubilee of our Independence.

I am instinctively impelled by the disciplines of the men who are being honoured today to reflect on the areas of their excellence.

Our first generation leaders gave us our Constitution. It is the Charter of Our Life — the *Magna Carta* of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms and of equity and social justice, the dynamo of our economic progress. We have to protect it with eternal vigil and reshape it to be consistent with changing times, preserving its basic structure. We should display wisdom in wielding the Constitution, elegantly distinguishing between what constitutes its use and abuse, so that democracy is always functional and federalism is always at work.

Our Constitution and our laws are, in practice, and ultimately, what our legal luminaries say they are. It is they who also graduate to the benches of our Judiciary. They have, indeed, rendered salutary service in helping us protect our Constitution and enjoy the fruits of the Rule of Law. Their professionalism is second to none in the world. The common men and those in positions of executive authority often get mired in the intricacies of constitutional and legal problems. The lawyers, taking time off from their professional routine, need to help in national debates on issues of public importance so that those concerned gain clarity on constitutional and legal proprieties. As late Shri C.N. Annadurai, the illustrious intellectual and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu said: " Law is a dark room; therein, the arguments of the lawyer are a lustrous lamp."

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\*At the Shiromani Awards, 1996 function, New Delhi, (22 February, 1997).

Law is also costly. About forty per cent of our people live below the poverty line. They live in the vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy and more poverty. They can't afford law. Lawyers, as a community, would need to help on legal aid to the poor. Politics in India has changed dramatically. Regional parties have strengthened. They have become centre-of-stage too. National outlook and national concerns are not the monopoly of national parties alone. They are the legitimate domain of regional parties as well. In fact, this outlook and these concerns should form as integral part of the mandate these parties have set for themselves. It was our British colonial masters who practised diarchy in our country. It seems to have virally afflicted us. The affliction gets projected every now and then in our Centre-State relationship and needs to be stamped out. The two-way relationship between the Centre and the States has to be anchored on the safety of national unity and integrity and of the national economy.

Probity in public life has, of late, become a matter of hot public debate. This is as it should be. There is a good section of the political leaders themselves who are keen on formal and informal mechanisms to ensure this. Indeed, probity seems to be a serious concern in several countries in the world.

The Lord Nolan Committee of British Parliament has gone into this matter and already given two reports. I have also had occasion to interact on this subject with the British parliamentarians and Lord Nolan himself during my recent visit to U.K. The Lord Nolan Committee has gone into the subject on the basis of a rather wide definition of the term 'holder of public office'. It covers Ministers, members of Parliament, civil servants, advisers and those connected with public bodies. Standards and probity are issues of ethics. They have relevance, apart from the domain of politics, to several sections of society, including professionals and the corporate world.

We have a very vibrant Press. They have always scouted out for smoke and led our society to trace the underlying fires from where smoke comes. I have always stood for the freedom of the Press. I also have Media friends from all over India. I never tire of telling that they should become increasingly professional. Technology has overtaken the Press as well. News dailies and journals from all over the world can now be accessed instantaneously in the households on the Internet. Internet journalism is a double edged sword. We get incredible insights into the world around us. We also stand exposed to the world. Particularly in this context, I would urge the Press to facilitate balanced flow of information. This is what we have been preaching to the industrialised countries. We have been telling them that without taking unfair advantage of their Media dominance, they should desist from one-sided,

adverse projection of the poor countries. Within our country as well, the Press would need to project the positive as well as negative sides of our life. Obsession with our inadequacies and failures is fatal to our world image and more than that the psyche of our own people. It can lull our people into apathy and disillusion.

The world is globalizing. National economies are liberalizing. In the process, the Governments are being taken off the backs of the common people. In this scenario particularly, the civil society represented by Non-Governmental Organisations have a significant role to play. We have, in our country, a wide network of these Organisations. Being grassroots institutions, they have been playing a crucial role in rural development and poverty alleviation. People do look for transparency of action and accountability, whether public service is rendered by Government or non-governmental agencies. Transparency and accountability should become a style of functioning whatever be the institutions, whoever are the individuals.

In the area of education, our nation is a paradox. We are one of the most illiterate countries in the world. We are also one of the foremost nations in terms of skilled man power. This situation is a reflection of the fragmentation of our society into haves and have-nots. But this is also reflective of our capabilities to acquire skills and be productive. We need to enhance the quantity as well as the quality of our manpower in terms of education and employable skills. Education should be made relevant to the world of work. We should universalize elementary education, vocationalize secondary education and professionalize higher education. And, achievement of excellence in sports should be one of the basic objectives of the entire spectrum of education.

The diversity of our life is reflected in our culture and art forms as well. Our heritage is rich and colourful in music, dancing, painting and sculpture. Fast changing technology and values have come to have impact on our arts as well. Cutting across linguistic and other barriers, arts impact on the instinct and the very soul of the people. All arts, whether classical, neo-classical or modern, should be made accessible to the common people.

Let me now conclude. I once again compliment all the distinguished recipients of the Shiromani Awards. I wish them long years of continued service to our society and to humanity. I thank the Shiromani Institute and its dedication to the cause of national values.

Jai Hind.

## SPIC MACAY—LAUDABLE INITIATIVES\*

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The Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music Amongst Youth (SPIC MACAY) has rendered two decades of significant service in the cause of exposing the youth of the country to our composite culture. The organisation, as I understand, has been organising innovative programmes — lecture demonstrations, concert festivals, grant of scholarships to have short-term attachments with artistes to know about their life and professional styles and school and college programmes. Today's programme hosted by the Modern School as part of the Fifth Delhi School's Convention of SPIC MACAY is one of these innovative programmes. Today and tomorrow, students from Delhi and the Northern Region are going to be delighted by some of the very eminent artistes of our country. I felicitate SPIC MACAY. I compliment the Modern School. I congratulate the students.

The logo of SPIC MACAY is the 'inner eye', the eye of perception which kindles the spirit of enquiry in pursuit of truth. What is the 'inner eye'? Of course, it is not a physical or biological phenomenon. It is an extra-sensory perception, if I can put it like that. It springs from instincts, from what we figuratively call the 'guts and bones'.

Every human being is endowed with this capability for extra-sensory perception for the finer aspects of life — be it music, painting, dancing or any other art form. This capability has two faces — one face to spontaneously and naturally render music or execute a painting or perform a dance and the other face, to appreciate any art form. The youth being highly impressionable and being of mercurial intellect are capable of getting quickly shaped into artistes of excellence and connoisseurs of art.

Educationists often refer to the 'process of education'. A formula in the 'process of education' often quoted by them is 'each according to his capability and each according to his pace'. This formula is nothing but identifying the students with different cognitive capabilities and promoting them in their

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\*At the Fifth Delhi Schools Annual Convention of SPIC MACAY, New Delhi, (3 May, 1997).

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natural areas of competence and aptitude. And promotion of artistic capabilities of the youth to preserve and promote our culture is, indeed, part and parcel of what we understand as 'value education' which, in turn, is subsumed in our National Policy on Education.

Culture is not something which gets deep-frozen. It is timeless. It always undergoes the process of evolution. There are contributions to a society's culture from generation to generation. It gets diversified, deepened, strengthened, refined and updated. This process of evolution should not be blocked. When Kalidasa wrote his *Sakuntalam*, he said:

"Everything that is old  
is not always gold;  
no epic needs to be taboo  
because it is new  
The intelligent are those who enquire why  
and identify what is high;  
Those who rely on other's judgement  
and go by old-world rules  
are but fools".

Whether it is classical music or folk music, the basic musical notes are the same. Only the rendition is different. Indeed, there is music in the chirping of the birds and the wafting of the wind; and there is the sound of the drums in thunder. Even the so-called light music is rooted in the classical. We should, therefore, side by side with appreciating what is classical, understand and esteem popular art forms as well, including pop music. These days light songs in Hindi and other regional languages are sung in anglicised tunes. This a development seen in other countries as well — China, other East Asian and South-East Asian countries. The music of Hindi pop musicians like Alisha Chinai, Parvati Khan, Sunita Rao and Shweta Shetty is also worthy of understanding and appreciation. A discerning ear will locate as well in their melody, basic musical notes.

Days were when painting and sculpture were true to the natural and the original. Over the years, all over the world, these arts have undergone phenomenal changes. Modern paintings and sculptures have increasingly become suggestive and far from the real. Often they are derogatorily referred to as surrealistic art forms. But these developments are to be seen in the overall context of evolution of art forms. Creativity is an expression of human ingenuity. And the products of ever evolving creativity need not be stereotyped as if they are products churned out of a machine line.

Every aspect of our life is being overtaken by technology. This is true of the world of arts as well. A whole range of computer programmes and electronic musical equipment have come into use. In the same equipment, we can generate the sound of several conventional musical instruments. We will be ill-advised to shun these technological developments so long as the centrality of human performance is preserved.

One of the problems in the appreciation of our classical art forms has been that in terms of their performance and their appreciation, they have remained rather exclusive to a few and esoteric. They deserve to be popularised amongst the masses and made intelligible to them.

Our ancient art forms have often had close linkage to religion and faith. Our paintings and sculptures were often based on scriptural themes, temple motifs, etc. With the advent of modern trends, these themes and motifs find new forms of expression. Such new forms should not be taken as distortion or vulgarization of the themes and motifs themselves. Indeed, vulgarity or sublimity are in the eyes of the beholder. What is seen as today's heresies may become tomorrow's orthodoxies in the process of evolution. Therefore, we would do well to avoid fundamentalist approaches in the world of arts and culture.

Some of our monuments have been recognized as 'World Heritage' by the UNESCO. One such monument is the Red Fort at Agra. But it is rather sad that the surroundings of the Fort are in very bad state of maintenance. In fact, the local environment is shockingly repelling. We, as a nation, and the youth in particular, should take special care to help maintain the symbols of our national heritage in very pleasant ecology and environment.

Art forms need patrons. Giving expression to creativity requires time. In the material world, artistes who are professionals have to earn their livelihood as well. Sometimes, industrial houses patronise artistes. We also have Government agencies promoting them. For example, at the national level, we have the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. We have Departments of Culture and Cultural Centres. *Doordarshan* and the All India Radio also promote artistes by organising concerts and other events. These are only supportive in nature. The demand has to necessarily come from the masses. Consistent efforts in inculcating the youth a feel for, and interest in, arts will help significantly in promoting this mass demand.

I understand that the students assembled here are going to be exposed to a crafts mela as well. I also gather that about fifty master craftsmen are going to participate too. Our country has a very rich tradition of producing artefacts of world renown in several media — wood, metal, horns, bones,

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textiles, etc. Many of our crafts have been handed down the generations in terms of hereditary skills. These skills have to be preserved. They have to be researched. Transmission of these skills would also need to be institutionalised. It is also needless for me to say that production of artefacts has high employment potential.

It has been a matter of great pleasure for me to participate in today's Youth Meet of the SPIC MACAY. I feel honoured. I wish the Convention all success. I wish the students all the delight that they can expect in getting exposed to the eminent artistes who have been invited by SPIC MACAY. I wish that many of them become artistes of excellence and world fame.

Thank you.

## NEPHROLOGY—CHALLENGES BEFORE PROFESSIONALS\*

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I am immensely pleased to be present in this 27th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Nephrology.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been established by a special Act of Parliament as a centre of excellence in medical care, research and higher education and training. This venue is, indeed, consistent with the stature of this International Conference of nephrology professionals.

I am aware that nephrology is a highly specialised field of medicine which is multi-faceted in its dimensions; nephrological disorders have varied manifestations — diabetes, hypertension, nephritis, cystic kidney etc. — and these disorders are of varying complexities at the primary, secondary and end stages.

We live in a fast world; people are generally impatient, and patients, more so having experienced incredible technological advances in medical sciences, demand almost instantaneous cure for their disorder. The situation is further confounded by a general negligence towards preventive treatment at the initial stages and subsequent reluctance on the part of the patients to subject themselves to surgery. The overall environment is such that patients often get involved more and more in end stage renal complications.

I understand from the organisers of this Conference that nephrology has made very rapid progress in the last four decades and that several sophisticated methods of treatment like hemo-dialysis, plasma exchange, kidney transplantation, etc. have been developed because of which thousands of patients with acute and chronic kidney problems are saved. I am sure that the eminent nephrologists who have come from within and outside India to give plenary lectures in the Continuing Medical Education Programme organised in the context of the Conference will leave the participants very much more knowledgeable and enlightened in the profession.

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\*At the inauguration of the 27th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Nephrology, New Delhi, (6 October, 1996).

In any branch of medical treatment, proper diagnosis is the obvious first step. In diagnosis, as important as qualified manpower, sophisticated equipment and scientific methodologies, is an understanding of the environment as reflected by a rational study of the incidence of diseases. In my experience as an administrator in my State as well as Central Government, we are not very professional in maintaining medical records; and even if we do maintain these records, adequate attention is not being paid to their analysis which is very important for rationally understanding environmental and incidence factors.

In the context of this Conference, I tried to access analytical data on the incidence of End Stage Renal Diseases (ESRD) in different parts of the world. I came across some very interesting analytical data so far as it relates to USA. These data reflect:

- Incidence of ESRD peaks in the age group of 45-64.
- The average age of incidence has been rising.
- Incidence is more in males than in females.
- Relative to population, incidence is more amongst the blacks than the whites.
- Incidence is 27 per cent in terms of diabetes, 24 per cent in terms of hypertension, 17 per cent in terms of nephritis and 5 per cent in terms of cystic kidney.
- Incidence of hypertension is more amongst males and of diabetes more amongst females.

May be, similar data are available in regard to other countries as well. I do not, however, know whether these data have been collected in India or in other developing countries. What is important is that we should establish computerised National Renal Data Systems which would facilitate understanding national situations better and which would help in sharing of experiences across the world.

As all of you may know, the World Health Organisation and the World Bank have established the concept of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY). This is a formula for determining the number of years of life lost for each death. The formula is simple. DALY is simply the difference between the actual age at death and life expectancy. If a person dies at the age of 40, and if normal life expectancy is 60, loss of life years is 20 (60 minus 40). The difference in life years is conceived as being caused by disability on account of diseases. Hence the nomenclature Disability Adjusted Life Year. According to the World Development Report of 1993, DALY loss for India is 292 million.

This is 21 per cent of the world's total DALY loss. India ranks next only to sub-Saharan Africa. Renal diseases are some of the most debilitating diseases and are bound to contribute to significant levels of DALY loss. Diabetes and nephritis account for DALY loss of 1 million each in India.

How do we tackle the situation? Several measures could be taken. As I mentioned earlier, National Renal Data System should be established with reference to scientifically organised medical records facilities.

Considerable investment will have to be made in medical research; in planned economies, significant public investments will have to be made. Overall investment of the Central and State Governments for health as a whole in terms of 8th Plan Outlay was only 1.75 per cent. It has been our experience that the social sector, which includes health, often receives stepmotherly treatment in the matter of resource allocations. Conscious efforts should be made to enhance resource allocation to health, particularly research in chronic diseases. The need for this would become evident considering that health aid in terms of official development assistance to India has been only of the order of US \$ 0.34 (34 cents) per capita. Medical research professionals, including those dealing with renal diseases, should be given adequate career advancement and professional development opportunities. They should be given attractive salary structures. National capacities for research in terms of institution building have to be enhanced; and the linkage between research and utilisation of research results needs to be strengthened.

Vast multitudes of people live below the poverty line in developing countries. In India, more than 30 per cent come under this category. For these deprived sections, access to treatment for medical diseases of a chronic nature is often beyond reach, even as well-to-do sections of the society are able to access on-line computerised medical services. This iniquity is rather glaring. Medical infrastructure should be significantly strengthened. We have only one physician per 2500 population. The norm is availability of 3 nurses per doctor. We have more doctors than nurses. For the size of India, the total stock of about 12,000 hospitals and about 800,000 hospital beds are woefully inadequate. There are not enough kidney specialists in India. Many States lack this speciality. Special efforts have to be made to enhance the availability of specialised manpower in nephrology. Sometimes, there have been instances where equipment for renal disease treatment have remained idle for want of provisions for recurring expenditure. Administrative procedures have to be streamlined for well co-ordinated efforts at building up hospital infrastructure.

We may also have to establish innovative health insurance schemes. Of course, the subsidiaries of Life Insurance Corporation, like the United Insurance, Oriental Insurance and General Insurance have health insurance

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programmes. But experience has shown that reimbursals by these insurance bodies are ridden with procedural problems. I may mention in this context of an innovative medical insurance scheme being implemented by the Manipal Medical College Hospital. The hospital authorities themselves run the scheme, based on modest premia collected from people living in their areas of service. Where the hospital authorities themselves play the role of insurers, procedural red tapes are avoided. May be, there are other such health insurance programmes being run by private medical institutions. Such efforts should be encouraged and replicated. The manner in which the public agencies can help the poor in meeting health insurance premium liabilities in an equitable and administratively efficient manner should be gone into.

In the area of nephrology particularly, the scientific advances often turn out to be a bane for the poor while it may be a boon for the those who have the means to avail of the benefit of these advances. It is well known that there is a commercial demand for kidneys after the advent of kidney transplant technology. The poor often deprive themselves of their health by becoming kidney donors for a consideration. The Government and the professional community in this context will have to make cooperative efforts in preventing the tragic result of crass commercialisation. A positive step which has been taken by India in this area is the enactment of the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, which has come into effect in February, 1995. The law provides for cadaver organ transplantation.

Treatment of diseases, including the renal ones, is not a mere matter of application of professional expertise, accurate diagnosis, administration of the proper medicines and use of modern gadgets. It is also a matter of the physicians treating the patients with a human touch and understanding. In fact, particularly in the treatment of renal diseases, emotional support services would need to be established because the patients suffering chronic disorders and their relatives need a lot of psychological support.

I am sure that this Conference will comprehensively go into all aspects of renal disease treatment — professional, economic and social — and will make significant contributions to the cooperative effort of all of us in the direction of "Health for all by the Year 2000 A.D."

I have great pleasure in inaugurating the Conference. I thank you in having chosen me to do the inaugural.

Jai Hind.

## CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES— PREVENTION AND CARE\*

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I am happy to be in your midst today on the occasion of your Annual Conference. Thank you for inviting me to be the Chief Guest on this momentous occasion. I say 'momentous' because you have chosen to deliberate on a topic which touches our 'hearts' not in the medical sense, but in the figurative sense — of prevention of cardiovascular diseases. As doctors, I know you find great challenge in diagnosing diseases and finding cures. As a lay person and a representative of the people, I find equal challenge in not attracting the disease and preventing it from happening. I therefore congratulate you on the theme of your XIII Annual Conference.

The Parliament of India has been greatly concerned on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, on the health of the people, filling in a quality of life in the sixty odd years of life expectation from birth, finding sustainable ways of development that will provide reasonable requirements of life and liberation from hunger, disease and poverty. We want our freedom from ignorance as much as from bondage.

Our distinguished members of Parliament have been deliberating on the issues that bother one-sixth of the world's population that lives on this sub-continent, to find strategies to make this a vibrant nation of able and capable persons who will lead the world in the next millennium. I feel your deliberations will add to this heart-search and offer solutions to remove disabilities.

It is a matter of pride for us that we are able to provide medical professionals even to the developed countries to man their health systems; and yet I feel ashamed that we are close to Sub-Saharan Africa in the matter of Disability Adjusted Life Year Loss (DALY Loss). With 292 million life years lost in a year, we contribute 21 per cent of the total 'DALY Loss'

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\*At the inaugural of the XIII Annual Conference of the Cardiological Society of India, New Delhi, (30 August, 1997).

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in the world. 'DALY Loss' was introduced by the World Development Report of 1993, which measured the difference between the actual age of death and life expectancy in a nation. Can we allow this to be our contribution to the world? Certainly not.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, what should we do? Do we build hospitals of world class to administer the world's latest technologies? Should we get more qualified doctors and other health personnel? Or shall we analyse what interventions are required to prevent people from becoming disabled with sickness and ailments that would require enormous wealth to cure them?

Indians, I believe, are more prone to heart diseases than the people in the West. Genetically, the incidence of coronary heart diseases are 2 to 3 times greater for Indians. Even in the USA, heart attack amongst Indians below the age of 30 years is 10 times more common than the native population. Unfortunately, the heavy toll on life owing to communicable diseases, which is nearly 51 per cent, masks other causes like heart diseases, which is high compared to other countries. It has been assessed by the World Bank report to be causing 2.8 per cent of the 'DALY Loss' in a scenario of poor health conditions. Then, it is greater reason for us to look into the causes that bring about this condition and educate ourselves to prevent it. We are aware that USA has been able to bring about a 50 per cent decline in coronary heart disease in a span of 30 years. The interventions have been to eliminate the risk factors. I am afraid we in India are increasingly creating an environment for more incidence of coronary heart diseases as we see more and more young people getting afflicted day after day.

Our changing life styles are attributed as one of the major reasons for this calamity. We must, I believe, learn to measure our quality of life not by counting per capita expenditure on food, but by evolving a method to examine the content of the meal. High calorie diets may be essential for our toiling labour, to provide them more energy, but a lot of high calorie junk food to our affordable youngsters is leading them closer to their graves; we have to warn them. Who will tell them? Text books in their schools? Teachers? Parents? Advertisers? At least doctors?

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like you to deliberate on this responsibility. I am afraid that specialisation in knowledge sometimes leaves the specialist ignorant or unmindful of other factors except his or her specialisation. Often doctors are ignorant of diets as they think it is the duty of the dieticians to prescribe diets. But who can afford to go in search of dieticians all the time separately? Nor have we in our society

elevated dieticians to a high pedestal and given them a place of importance in the health system. I believe there has to be more holistic medical education to help doctors cope with multi-disciplinary situations. It should be possible for patients to get all the relevant advice at one stop than go to a number of specialists who may even give conflicting advice. We need to accord a high place to nutritionists and dieticians as professionals in our society. We need to guide the community on a total approach of medical and way of life therapy telling them about the right things to eat so that a large number of diseases can be prevented by inculcating healthy eating and exercise habits.

It is not that these are new things. What has happened in our process of getting 'educated' is that we have shed a lot of valuable traditional knowledge. Just as our former Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao was mentioning in the Parliament the other day, we have to learn about Mahatma Gandhiji's thoughts from other countries, while we have lost it in our memory. Many of our traditional knowledge has not percolated to our generation due to our defective systems of learning. We have put knowledge in compartments without integrating old and new knowledge and harmonising them for their optimum benefit. Many Universities in the West are researching on our treasures of knowledge, but we have lost touch with them. I am happy that we now have our Department of Indigenous Systems of Medicine. I hope they bring a pragmatic approach to harmonise the old and the new systems. We have the example of China who have brought about this integration.

With all the new technology at our disposal we are slowly losing our abilities to use our limbs — we walk less, bend less, etc. Life has become sedentary. This lack of exercise is one more reason for many of the new diseases of the rich, combined with their diets. Interventions are very feasible in these areas by introducing healthy life styles as has been done in other parts of the world. The greatest wealth one can possess is good health, not pots of money. Unfortunately, money cannot even buy it! We may invest heavily in high-tech diagnostic centres.

As a consumer, very often I find I do not even know what I am eating. We do not have a strict regime by which foods are labelled showing the ingredients and their compositions. It is important to educate the consumers on the harmful things they are eating and buying disease along with their food. I am sure, as experts, you could prescribe strategies for transferring information to the consumers on the risky food they are eating, so that they can regulate their diets in an informed way.

What is very important in our country situation is that we have a variety of fruits and vegetables where the majority of our population live, namely rural areas. We have to keep these accessible to them for their balanced diets. We have to keep them informed of the nutritional values as also the virtues of their life styles. We cannot help going back to Mahatma Gandhi's advice on these matters, his farsighted messages on healthy living.

I know the matter is in expert hands and the eminent cardiologists who have gathered here will bring their expertise to solve the massive problems we have on hand. Let me wish you success in your efforts and a lot of good luck for the care of the people — sick ones as well as those that are healthy today. We all know prevention is better than cure.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

## NGOs—THEIR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES\*

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The principle of democracy is establishment of “Government of the People, by the People and for the People”. Elections are held; people’s representatives are returned; they form the Government to run the State apparatus and the Government consisting of the political and permanent Executive is expected to establish rule “for the people”.

Often people get to ask the question whether rule for the people exists at all. We establish laws but not all of them get implemented. This is particularly so in the social sector; like, for example, labour laws. In the area of maintenance of law and order, the police machinery is expected to function with restraint. But, often, allegations are made about police excesses. Governments themselves are expected to be run in conformity with the provisions of the Constitution. But there are allegations frequently of violation and misuse of constitutional provisions. Examples are almost endless.

This is what Chief Justice Mr. J.S. Verma has characterised yesterday as the “gap between law and justice”. In our vast country of a population of about 960 million and 25 States and 6 Union territories, the Civil Service is not in a position to reach the grassroots level as effectively as it should. This is not peculiar to our country alone. This is true of several countries — developed and developing. This is true of several societies. All over the world, Governments are suspect. They are feared. Hence the call for involvement of the “civil society” in providing Government “for the people”.

How is the civil society to be involved? Through Non-Governmental Organisations — the NGOs. The merit of these Organisations is that they exist and operate at the grassroots.

Since long before the present day involvement of NGOs in a big way, our country has been accustomed to marvellous service to the people rendered by organisations like the Ramakrishna Mission, the Christian Churches and the Muslim organisations. They are renowned for their educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, old age homes, etc.

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\*At the Rotary Vocational Excellence Award presentation ceremony, New Delhi, (5 May, 1997).

In my opinion, NGOs can, and should, render service in certain crucial areas. I never tire of trying to bring home to our people that all our societal and economic problems are to be traced to our massive population. We are going to be nearly one billion in size — about 20 per cent of world population. Birth rate is not going down commensurately with the decline in death rate. This has serious implications in terms of increasing work-force, increasing responsibility to create employment opportunities, distribution of wealth, investments on human resource development, etc. Our country is not poor. It is rich in resources. It is the people who are poor. This is on account of population explosion which is not fast in subsiding. We cannot endlessly project ourselves as a country of vast masses of grinding poverty and incredible illiteracy. So, population education should receive the highest priority in the hands of NGOs.

Yet, another basic concern in our country is illiteracy. The national average of literacy is 52 per cent. Amongst women, it is lesser still, *i.e.* 39 per cent. There are certain distant parts of the country in which literacy is 15 per cent or even lower. NGOs should, therefore, involve themselves in formal and non-formal education, particularly of women.

One of the problems of our education is that to a significant extent, it is not relevant to the world of work. Particularly in the case of the very poor sections of our society, education cannot be for its own sake. It has to help them secure employment and earn their livelihood. In countries like Japan, South Korea and Germany, education is correlated to employability. Grassroot level organisations can come forward to fill the gaps in providing job-specific education. Jobs are available. People capable of absorbing skills are there. They should be prepared for absorption of skills and access to jobs.

Vast sections of our people suffer from high levels of morbidity. Our medical infrastructure is poor — in terms of availability of Primary Health Centres, doctors, nurses, hospital technicians, etc., not to speak of medicines. Communicable and non-communicable diseases and disorders are high in incidence. Many of the diseases could be prevented by simple health education processes like on the need for providing clean drinking water, drainage facilities, environmental sanitation, etc.

There are very many areas in which NGOs can take up responsibilities. But I have confined myself to certain areas only because I consider them rather basic to what is generally known in the country as “minimum needs”.

There are, indeed, a large number of Ministries and Departments which provide financial resources to NGOs to take up programmes in social and developmental sectors. There are programmes for non-formal education, adult

literacy, elimination of child labour, poverty alleviation and rural development, population and health education, non-conventional energy development, watershed development, etc. There has also been a proliferation of NGOs to implement these programmes with Government funding. Resources, these days, are also being directly routed to them by international agencies. Even in international organisations, NGOs have come to have a say through consultative and participative mechanisms.

While speaking on the social responsibilities of the NGOs, I would fail in my duty if I don't refer to certain important concerns.

When Government formations themselves spend resources, they stand clearly accountable through established mechanisms. Officials are subject to the disciplinary control of the Government. Programmes implemented and funds spent by them are subject to audit by the establishment of the Comptroller and Auditor General. This is not so in the case of most of the NGOs.

Experience shows that several NGOs, after receiving from Government initial instalment of grants for undertaking programmes, never turn up for claiming subsequent instalments. This is a clear indication of the fact that the organisations concerned have not used resources for the purpose for which they were given. It is also the experience that many of these organisations do not furnish utilisation certificates to establish the manner in which resources were utilised. Sometime back, there was even a report that assistance of the order of crores of rupees had not been accounted for by certain NGOs by submission of utilisation certificates duly authenticated by Chartered Accountants. Whenever resources are provided to NGOs, agreements are entered into for proper utilisation of funds. If there are breaches of agreements, litigation is the only course available to the governmental organisations providing resources. Some NGOs do not also take kindly to close scrutiny of their activities. The bogey of bureaucratic interference is raised if such scrutiny is attempted. It is necessary that NGOs hold themselves accountable. They should be accountable, first of all, to their own general bodies. Their styles of functioning should be transparent. They should provide access for those engaged in public service — parliamentarians, legislators, etc. — and Government functionaries to their projects and programmes to understand their effectiveness.

It has also been noticed that sometimes, some NGOs do go abroad and denigrate our country. I have particularly noticed this in the area of child labour elimination. Child labour indeed is a very serious problem. We have studied the dimensions of the problem and have brought several programmes under implementation, including through NGOs to eliminate it. The

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international community is also aware of it. Being a socio-economic malady, we cannot secure termination of child labour practice overnight. Despite this, we often get projected abroad as a nation of wanton child abuse. We do not see foreigners coming to India and denigrating their own societies and Governments. NGOs, particularly those working in sensitive areas, should make it a point to confine their criticisms within our national boundaries.

Many NGOs virtually depend on the Government for all their resources. This is not a very desirable trend. They should raise at least some resources from the community on their own. Indeed, there are very good NGOs who refuse to accept Government funding, even if offered, on the principle that by accepting Government funds, they tend to lose their autonomous character.

No organisation, whether it be of the Government or non-governmental sector, can do service without some bureaucracy. Very often, when funds are given by Government, they are tied to projects. Once the projects are over, the project staff may have to be disbanded for want of resources. NGOs, being continuing entities, need secretarial staff and field workers on a continuing basis as well. In view of this, these organisations should build up a corpus, interest earning from which could support a core staff.

So, dear Rotarians, as industrialists, business people and professionals and as members of the Rotary Club which is itself a NGOs, take up responsibilities in four kinds of education — population education, health education, education relevant to employment and adult education.

I gather that the motto of Rotary Club of Delhi South is "Build the Future with Action and Vision". I hope that my experiences with the NGOs and my perception about their responsibilities and style of operation which I have shared with you may deepen the vision of the Rotarians assembled here and help them in building the future with action emergently required for building our nation.

Thank you for your attention.

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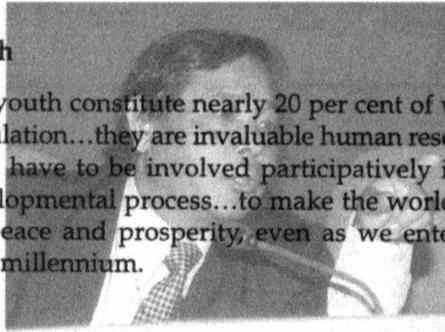
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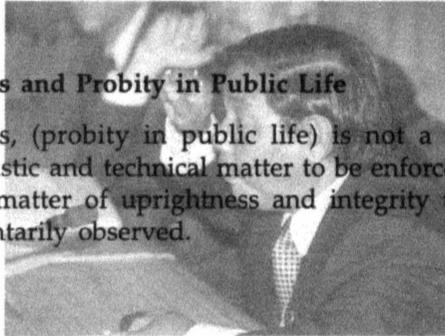
### **Youth**

The youth constitute nearly 20 per cent of world population...they are invaluable human resource. They have to be involved participatively in the developmental process...to make the world safe for peace and prosperity, even as we enter the next millennium.



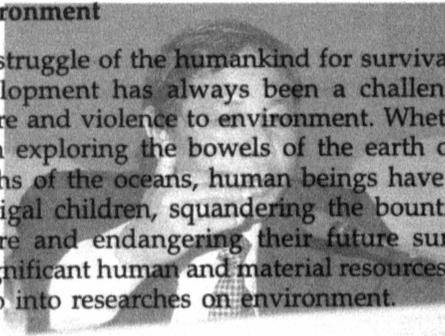
### **Ethics and Probity in Public Life**

Ethics, (probity in public life) is not a mere legalistic and technical matter to be enforced. It is a matter of uprightness and integrity to be voluntarily observed.



### **Environment**

The struggle of the humankind for survival and development has always been a challenge to nature and violence to environment. Whether it be in exploring the bowels of the earth or the depths of the oceans, human beings have been prodigal children, squandering the bounties of nature and endangering their future survival ...significant human and material resources need to go into researches on environment.



### **Economic Growth**

Economic growth is not a mere matter of GDP. Hungry people cannot be fed on tables of National Accounts Statistics. Distribution of wealth is very important as well. But wealth is to be generated before it could be distributed. The process of wealth generation should be self-sustaining as well.

