

LOK SABHA

Monday, May 5, 1969/Vaisakha 15,
1891 (Saka)

*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock.*

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

OBITUARY REFERENCE

DEMISE OF DR. ZAKIR HUSAIN, PRESIDENT
OF INDIA

MR. SPEAKER : The hon. Prime
Minister.

**THE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF
ATOMIC ENERGY AND MINISTER OF
PLANNING (SHRIMATI INDIRA
GANDHI) :** Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise to speak

with a heavy heart. The country has
suffered a grievous loss, and the world has
lost a man of vision and compassion. Dr.
Zakir Husain was a wise guide to our
people. He reflected the best in the heritage
of civilised man. He was an unusual
amalgam of steadfastness and gentleness,
representing the finest flowering of the
composite culture of our country.

It is rare to find so integrated a perso-
nality as Dr. Zakir Husain's. His life was
rich and varied. Every visit to him, every
conversation with him was an enriching
experience, and I think, Sir, that that was
the feeling of most people who met him. He
was a learned scholar, a thinker and a
writer of distinction. Interested in people
and nature, he was a connoisseur of creative
arts and had a deep and abiding interest
in the finer things of life. With his wealth
of knowledge and experience, he had a dis-
arming simplicity. Although he rose to the
highest positions in the land, he retained the
humility of true greatness and was proud
to describe himself as a mere teacher. He
was so little attracted to pomp and power

that the high offices which he held had to
be thrust upon him. He set the highest
standards of conduct for himself, and every
act and gesture of his was living proof of
this high integrity, ennobling all around him.
To the end of his days, he remained an
elder statesman whose soft words of wisdom
were heard in defence of all that is of
enduring value in public life.

Many influences moulded his personality,
the teaching of Islam and other great
religions of our country and the world, the
inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi and other
great seekers of freedom and light the
liberal and humane philosophies of the West
and the writings of the great poets and
authors of all lands. He had an inquiring
mind, not an accepting one. But he was
free from dogma or narrowness of any
kind and bent his fastidious intellect to a
search for harmony and in the interests of
a larger purpose.

It is two years since the nation elected
him to this high office. I recall the contro-
versy which was generated at that time.
But I am sure that to-day every one in the
country, without distinction of party, region
or religion, would agree that Dr Zakir
Husain adorned the office of President with
dignity, distinction and unblemished integrity.
We did not elect him because he was a
Muslim by birth and faith. We elected
him because he was the most eminent Indian
we could think of to be the first citizen of
our Republic. And in the manner in which
he conducted himself as President and
earlier as Vice-President and Chairman of
Rajya Sabha, he vindicated India's basic
commitment to democracy and secularism.

As President and representative of India,
he made a deep impression on the statesmen
and people of other countries, and earned
greater esteem and friendship for India.

This evening we shall lay to rest a great
India, who belongs to the long line of sages

and wise rulers of our ancient land. It is fitting that he should be laid to rest in an important centre of learning which he himself had built through his dedication and where practically every brick, book and tree he had chosen. He will be one with the soil, the flowers and the plants of the land he loved so much. Dr Zakir Husain was a man who wanted our country to become a garden and a school. His gracious presence is no more but his gentle words of deep conviction and his example of dedication, compassion and tolerance will remain in our memory and become part of our conscience.

Mr Speaker, as the Head of the Government I naturally mourn the death of the President. In the many difficult crises through which the country has passed during his brief tenure, he was a source of strength to my Government. But I remember him from the olden days of our freedom struggle. I remember also his long-standing comradeship with my father and other eminent leaders. This was a partnership which bound together all classes and castes, the old and the young in a common—cause the unity, the freedom and the welfare of our people.

In paying homage to Dr. Zakir Husain, let us rededicate ourselves to our cherished values and to our unfinished tasks.

May I, Sir, on behalf of the Government and also on behalf of the whole House, request you to be good enough to convey to Dr. Zakir Husain's family our sincerest condolences as also the assurance that we share their sorrow ?

May I move a Resolution at this stage ?
Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Lok Sabha, assembled under the shadow of a national tragedy, expresses its profound sense of sorrow at the sudden death of the President of India, Dr. Zakir Husain, and pledges itself to promote the high ideals of patriotism, national unity, secularism and the service of humanity which he upheld."

SHRI M. R. MASANI (Rajkot) : Mr Speaker, Sir, in grief we are united. The

Leader of the House has spoken for all of us. I would like, on behalf of my Party to associate ourselves with what has fallen from her lips and also with the Resolution that has been placed before the House.

Sir, it is now more than thirty years that I recall first meeting Dr Zakir Husain. Most of the time that I knew him, I knew him as an educationist. It was in that capacity that many of us came to appreciate him and admire him.

I remember, in the early forties, or the mid-forties when he was concerned with establishing the Jamia Milia, I had the privilege to be of a little help to him in placing that establishment on a well-endowed and stable basis.

And then, later on, I knew him as Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh University, later as Governor of Bihar and then as Vice-President.

As the Prime Minister had said, Sir, he was an embodiment of culture, of patriotism and love of the country, of gentleness and humility.

As the Prime Minister recalled, in 1967 we, on this side of the House, were unable to concur in his election as President. That, Sir, was based on broad political considerations and the national interest as we conceived it. And it was done, so far as some of us were concerned, with great regret, because of the personal regard we had for the man.

He was a great Gandhian and a great democrat and he understood this and I can testify to the fact that he did not allow that incident to colour or mar in the slightest the personal relations he had with some of us. I remember only a few months ago, a long, intimate conversation I had with him when he shared with me his concern at the state of the country and the nation.

A commentator of All India Radio said on Saturday night that he hated to think of Dr Zakir Husain as belonging to the world of politics. He said that "neither temperamentally nor intellectually did he belong to that shady world." Perhaps the way in