

[English]

**THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL)** : Mr. Speaker, Sir,...(Interruptions)

[Translation]

Very good. No, I have no difficulty in speaking in Hindi. I was simply thinking...(Interruptions) I have heard your voice...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Why are you making noise? The interpretation is available there. You cannot make a demand like that. The Prime Minister will speak in the language of his choice.

SHRI R.G. NANAGURUSWAMY (Peiryakulam) : He should speak in English.

SHRI S.K. KARVENDHAN (Palani) : Why should the reply not be in English?

MR. SPEAKER : You cannot make a demand like that.

[Translation]

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was saying that I had heard your voice. My friends had met me in the morning and they had praised me for having delivered my speech in Hindi after assuming this post.

Hindi is my mother tongue, I have been brought up in the same language and I also represent the same culture from which this language has originated. All languages whether it is Hindi or Urdu have originated in this country. They have not come from outside.

21.00 hrs.

Therefore, whenever I speak this language, a common man can understand it, I am neither a 'Pandit', nor a 'Gyani' nor a 'Maulavi'. I am of the view that whosoever speaks from this post in any language, his line of communication should be linked with his people. I was trying to speak in English because there are so many people in the country who do not understand Hindi even today.

I spoke in Hindi in the morning and if you permit, I would like to speak now in English so that my voice could reach to those people who do not understand Hindi.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when I rise this evening to continue what I had submitted to the House this morning seeking its confidence, I am not in a mood to defend or offend anybody. That was not my purpose. My purpose basically was that we, in this House, should look at my commitments that I was trying to make in the morning itself. The debate, as it developed, has highlighted two things. One is, all sections of the House have tried to mention my name in their words for which I am grateful

and therefore that induces more humility in me. So, when I speak from this seat and when I look down in this seat, there are three blocks shown here. One of these shows that Jawaharlal Nehru sat here. The second block says that Indira Gandhi sat here. The third one says that Lal Bahadur Shastri also sat here. When I look at their names, I find myself a very small person, I find myself a very humble person. But I am grateful to you that you have honoured me. The more you honour me, the more humble, I feel.

[Translation]

Which is called 'Namrata' in Hindi. I speak with humility and I would like to submit that whatever promises I had made in the morning, I stick to them. Before speaking further, I would like to make clear that I had begun my speech with a point in the morning.

[English]

In the morning I had said that I am speaking on the 50th year of Indian Independence. This 50th year is not just numerical because everybody adds years. You cannot stop that process; whether we think in terms of an individual's age or we think in terms of the growth of a nation or we think in terms of the development of history, there are certain factors which are beyond us and adding years is one of them. Therefore, when we look at 50 years of India's Independence, I think, as a nation, we owe to ourselves and I mean, all sections of the House not me only. We owe to ourselves to look back and also look forward.

When we look back, I reminded in the morning to my friends that we look back with a great deal of pride—not only me, not only the friends who are sitting here, but all sections of the House—the legacy of the freedom struggle. That freedom struggle was not fought by one individual. It was not fought by one particular party, although Congress was the name. But Congress was a platform and Congress had a bigger dimension than the party think of itself today.

I do not know how many amongst us or in this House choose to remember that tradition when Congress was not only spelling out that why it was resisting and fighting colonialism, but it was also spelling out, at the same time, the future of India. I think our freedom struggle was unique in one sense which I cannot think of in any other freedom struggle in the world that while fighting, while struggling and while resisting imperialism, we were spelling out the future of India.

The forefathers or the founders or whatever you might call them, call it Mahatma Gandhi, call it Jawaharlal Nehru, call it Sardar Patel, call it Maulana Azad or whatever you might call, they spelt out for us what shall be the shape of India. The Constitution of India is not just a document, it is not just a book, although we take pride in saying that the authorship of this, to a large extent, is due to the contribution made by Baba Saheb Ambedkar, but it spelt out those very promises which the freedom struggle had made.

[Shri I.K. Gujral]

One promise was democracy. The second promise was unity of India and also a unity of diverse India. This promise was made by saying that we, as I said in the morning in Hindi, belong to different religions, We have different ways of lives and we speak different languages; yet we are one. The freedom struggle unified us and that is one of the things which freedom struggle gave us. It also gave us a liberal outlook as my friend Shri Chidambaram was saying. The liberal outlook was not spelt out by me or by the college or by the school where I went. The liberal attitude was given to me by those who were leading the freedom struggle. They said that unless your mind is open, unless your heart is open, unless your outlook is wide and unless your vision is wide you can never lead India. That is what we are trying to follow, It is there in the legacy of India. Therefore, I only promise myself to you that if by chance of history or by whatever luck you might say, I have been called upon to sit here, I want to uphold that legacy.

That legacy has also spelt out the postulates of Indian future and India' future held many promises. As I said, it also made promise to those who go by the name of Sheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes first and foremost. I remember-as a younger man and many of you might have been younger men- when the freedom struggle was going on, Gandhiji went on an epic fast. Why did Gandhiji fast? Pandit Jawahar Nehru wrote an article at that time and I remember that article. Pandit Nehru thought at that time that Ganghiji was derailing the freedom struggle. He said, 'perhaps he was defocussing the issue from the main struggle to the other side'. He went on a fast to emphasise one thing that every human being has a right to go to a temple of his choice. That is why, he went on a fast and he was going to die. That was the spelling of Gandhiji and that is why Gandhiji became the Mahatma and that is what elevated him. When he elevated himself, he saw the miseries of that man who was denied entry to a temple and he saw the humiliation of that man. He saw the indignity of that man and when he saw the indignity and inhumanity of that man he said, 'I would rather lay my life for this till he enters the temple'. Gandhiji himself never went to a temple. He was a religious person but not of a temple going type. He was not a ravivalist. He was not an obscurantist. He was one of the most modern men in our history who were ever born. He transformed our social thinking.

I remember again, if I may turn slightly autobiographical that when my mother went to jail for the first time, my grandmother wept and wept for days and she said that she was not crying because her daughter had gone to jail, but that she could not show her face in her village because they would say, 'your daughter has gone to jail'. Gandhiji turned it into dignity and going to jail became an emblem of dignity. He

turned our values. Again the values he turned were to treat human beings as human beings. We may be Muslims and we may be Hindus. I do not want to spell out the castes, there are several, yet there is unity in India. The unity of India will never be physical unity. We unify the nation not in terms of making the Constitution or laws here. We can unify the hearts.

My friends there were asking about the status of Muslims; some friends were asking about the status of Sikhs; and some Members were asking me about the status of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They all represent human beings. They all represent the aspirations. They all represent their stake in this nation. Unify them and India is unified, divide them and India is gone.

What are we discussing today? Are we trying to define secularism? Are we defining this 'ism' and that 'ism'? Are we writing a thesis for a doctorate? Are we going to Harvard university to tell them how we look at that? We spelt it out in terms of our own experience; we spelt it out in terms of our social reality; and we spelt it out in terms of our legacy. If these three things are kept in mind then verything falls in its own place.

We may differ in this House. I have respect for Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee beyond my words. When he was the Foreign Minister I was his Ambassador. I know his values. I know what he believes in and what I know, I respect him for that. There may be difference of opinion amongst us and that is what democracy is all about. If there is a difference of opinion then what can one do?

Of course, Shrimati Sushma Swaraj is sitting there.

She was very eloquent. I do not know how to reply. Only one couplet of Urdu comes to my mind.

Tum Mukhatib Bhi Ho, Karib Bhi Ho  
Main Tumko Dekhoon Ya Tumse Bat Karoon.

This is the situation. But all the same, I think, now we have come to a stage when we have to look in terms of several things. In the morning, Sir, I talked about the security of India. We know that a massive nation like the Soviet Union collapsed. We hve seen it. Why did it collapse? I think, Atalji should tell us more than that I can tell you. I had lived in that society for five years, which looked so durable, which had all the tanks, which had all the planes, which had everything, but it collapsed. Internal security was not there. People had lost faith in their internal security.

I went there recently and I was asking one of my old friends of those days, who even now occupies a very important position in the present system. I said, "I am dying with wonder; I lived here for five years, everything looked fine, but then what happened?" This gentleman, I do not want to name him because he might be embarrassed there, said that he could tell me only one thing, that is, that they never had a State; they had a party. When that party collapsed, the State collapsed.

That is what we want to avoid here. We do want to make a situation where State is not more important than anything else. State is supreme and State does not belong to a single party. State does not belong to a single ideology. State does not belong to a single religion. State does not belong to a single caste. State belongs to all of us and the State of India, the glorious State of India, the great State of India, which has survived will survive if all of us place faith in that. Now, State speaks through the people. State always speaks through institutions. Judiciary is one of them. If we make a promise to the judiciary and do not fulfil it, the State is harmed. Let us not do it. State also speaks through this House. If we do not really spell out and also respect them, then you cannot hold my hand, Rashtrapathiji cannot get me arrested, but the State gets damaged. When the State gets damaged, I think the future gets damaged. State also gets damaged when many people lose faith in it. State gets damaged, when a young man is unemployed in the street. He loses faith in the State—first in the Government, and then in the State. You can remove a Government by a vote, but you can only undermine the State. Therefore, this undermining process must be stopped.

When we talk of secularism or we talk in terms of having some sort of a unity amongst us, we want to safeguard that. That is again one of my commitments which I would like to fulfil. I would also like to say, at the same time, that in this country there are several dimensions of our social life. We always take pride in the fact that farmers in this country matter. Yes, they do. And that is why, the great man, Lal Bahadur Shastri, said, "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan". He meant something by that. It was not a mere slogan. He was spelling out India. He knew that India meant these two segments of society particularly. I commit myself to that.

I commit myself also to all those issues which again spell out the policies. Atalji rightly said and I agree with him and I want to endorse it. Why has our foreign policy succeeded? It has not succeeded because Jawaharlal Nehru spelt it out. It has succeeded because when Atalji sat here, he said the same thing. When I sit here, I say the same thing. When Narasimha Raoji sat here, he said the same thing. When Chandra Shekharji sat here, he said the same thing. That is India. That is why, India's foreign policy succeeded. We can differ in details, sometimes. We can differ in drafting, sometimes. But consensus basically means that we uphold it. Why did Narasimha Raoji send Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, year after year, to the United Nations? Why did Narasimha Raoji depute me to the Human Rights Commission when we were confronted by a neighbour, whose name I do not want to mention?

It is because he wanted to give a message which every Prime Minister must give. I will continue to give that message whenever we go abroad, that we are one and we represent India. We do not represent parties. We do not represent differences. We represent the unity

of India. That is why, if it is my good luck to sit when the next session of the United Nations comes, I will see that Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee will still lead that delegation because he does it so well and I am impressed by his performance. Not only that. He is a high statured man. We in India take pride in this fact and that is our pride I think. Our pride is this that whether my friend Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao or my friend Shri Chandra Shekhar or my friend Shri Sharad Pawar sits here, ultimately when we go abroad, as Sir Winston Churchill once said :-

"I shall never criticise my nation abroad. I shall never spare it internally."

Therefore, that is how we proceed and that is the basis on which we want to build our nation.

I wanted to have the note which every Prime Minister has been getting from every Department. You know it, Mr. Speaker, you have been a Minister yourself. You know that neither you draft it nor do I. These notes come to me. I could have spelt out those notes and taken this time to spell out the details of policy of every Department. But I know the time is up. I will not take your time for this purpose now. But I will take your time next week when we discuss the Budget because that will be the time for me to spell out the details of policy. Today let me only spell out the postulates and caution the nation only on two things.

Again, I resort to Urdu when I say what Iqbal had once said :-

'Aine Nau sa Darna, Tarje Kohan pe Arana.  
Manzil Bhi Kathin Hai, Kaumon ki Zindgi main'

This is a difficult moment for us and at this difficult moment, we must transcend, bypass and swim through collectively together. In our history, we have seen moments when we had made mistakes, but if we had not made those mistakes, we would perhaps not have surpassed.

Again let me conclude by drawing your attention to another Urdu couplet which said :-

'Wo Waqt Bhi Dekhe Hain Tawarikh Ki Rahon Ne  
Lamhon Ne Khata Ki Thi, Sadiyon, Ne Saja Pai.'

I do not want the nation to perish. I commit myself only to one thing. My commitment is born out of my faith in this nation, my faith in the legacy of this nation and my fundamental faith in having that trust in the nation which Shri Jawaharlal Nehru promised. He did not spell out for himself. He was promising for all of us. He was promising for generations to come. I think this burden has come on us now to spell out and see the vision of 2020 not only in terms of years, but also the vision. 20:20 eye sight is always a good eye sight without fail. They are ideal glasses. Anyhow, I try to wear them insofar as political vision is concerned. Let all of us differ a little, please. Sometimes we can disagree. Sometimes we can disagreeably disagree. But let us all the same remember what India we want to build in this

[Shri I.K. Gujral]

50th year of the Indian Republic. In this House, I promise you one thing. I will try to continue practising the type of consensus that I tried to practise and I am glad Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee appreciated that point in the foreign policy. On that consensus basis, I am sure, we all can be proud of India in the coming years.

MR. SPEAKER : The question is :

"That this House expresses its confidence in the Council of Ministers."

*The motion was adopted.*

---

21.20 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE : SITTINGS OF THE  
HOUSE

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, in view of the fact that the minimum period of 10 days stipulated under

Rule 33 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha is not available for tabling Questions for 30th April and 2nd May, 1997, I have decided not to have Question Hour on these two days. Regular Question Hour will start from 5th May, 1997 onwards. The revised chart showing dates of ballots and last dates of receipt of notices of questions is being circulated to the Members. However, at the request of some hon. Members, notices of questions already given for the second phase of the originally scheduled Budget Session, i.e., from 21st April to 9th May, would be revived and considered for admission after suitable adjustments of dates.

The House stands adjourned to meet again on 30th of April, 1997 at 11.00 a.m.

21.21 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the  
Clock on Wednesday, April 30, 1997/Vaisakha 10,  
1919 (Saka)*

---