

SHRI M. KAMALUDDIN AHMED (Hanamkonda) : Sir, I want to lay my speech on the Table.

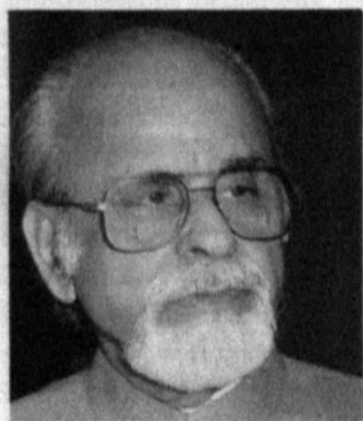
MR. SPEAKER : Please lay it quickly. Have you laid it on the Table?

SHRI M. KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Yes. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Is that all?

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : It is very nice. All the speeches that have been laid on the Table of the House will form a part of the proceedings.



SHRI I.K. GUJRAL

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) :

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I address myself to the topic of the day, may I join my worthy colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, in extending to you my hearty greetings and greetings of this House on the occasion of your 50th birthday? We wish you many happy returns of this day.

You were born a fortnight after India became free. It, therefore, looks curious of Providence that your 50th birthday also occurs in the 50th year of Independence. I believe that a greater future awaits you in the service of the nation as a greater future awaits this nation. My compliments to you!

MR. SPEAKER : Thank you very much.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I also compliment you for this novel idea that you projected regarding this discussion itself? I must say and I confess that—of course, it was unprecedented—in the entire history of 50 years of our Republic, this has happened for the first time.

Once again, I join Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in complimenting you for this perception. Many of us—I have been very frank—both on that side and this side were initially having doubts as to how this would proceed, how much interest will be taken, how many Members will really speak

on the subjects that we were thinking of. Sometimes these doubts were also verging on scepticism. This discussion, I must say, as it proceeded for so many days and in such a laborious way the Members have participated, has belied those disbeliefs and those doubts.

The discussion has been of a very high level. I think never in my long association with Parliament have I witnessed so much enthusiasm and so much interest on the part of Members that they could sit overnight and participate in the debate. And also, as Atal Ji rightly said, all of them—I must compliment all my colleagues in the House from all sides—took pains to prepare themselves on the subjects they were speaking. The same thing happened with the House also. Therefore, in a way it is a compliment to the entire Parliamentary system.

Hon. Members, I must say, have exhibited remarkable courage, vision and capacity to rise above the normal din that we witness in our debates in normal times. That has been belied in these five days. Collective introspection is something new for us but all the same I think this could be the best homage that this House could pay to the Golden Anniversary of our republic. Therefore, all that has happened in the last few days is something, Mr. Speaker, for which credit goes to you once again. The discussion, may I repeat, sometimes continued, as I said, till the early hours of the day or night, I do not know whether day or night because sometimes the whole night sitting was going on. The discussion has been useful, educative and thought provoking and very often we discovered the un-discovered dimensions of our democratic polity. As an institution Parliament has touched new heights and its capacity to rise above the Party affiliations and examine with remarkable objectivity the achievements and shortfalls of these 50 years. Some of the speeches that one heard here and in the other House persuade us to believe that the nation continues to produce great minds and great ideas. The nation continues to rededicate itself, as it did on the first day of our Republic, and therefore, in that spirit this debate has proceeded.

I have taken note of what hon. Members have said. As my worthy colleague, the Leader of the Opposition has suggested, definitely we will go through all that has been said and compile them and also initiate action on various issues that have been mentioned here. I have been called upon to speak at this stage when I am expected to sum up the discussion. This is a very gigantic task and I dare not do it because it is not easy. All that has been said in the wise words that have been uttered in the last five days or so and the specific issues that have been raised, it may not be feasible nor possible for me to respond to all of them.

At some time, on some occasion some of my colleagues have participated in the debate and projected their points of

view. I will not try to repeat what has been said. I will only try to say myself that the debate has inspired me a great deal. It has made me think a lot about what India is and what is the definition of India, particularly in the 50th year. We are re-defining ourselves and this re-definition has been very helpful because all my worthy colleagues sitting in this House and that House have put in very remarkable vision and ideas. Sometimes I felt that the discussion touched the borders of sublimity. Sometimes I felt that we are rising above ourselves in a sublime manner and I also felt that the most important was our country, our nation. The struggle for independence has been the background of our discussion. We have also seen and felt that this struggle that we are talking of which built the freedom on 15th August, 1947, was in a way, I think, the continuation of our civilisation.

When we look at our civilisation, its peaks and valleys, we discover what made our freedom struggle succeed. The saga of freedom struggle is a long one. I will not take your time to talk about the freedom struggle, its life and the history which it had passed through. But one thing was very clear. When we look back to those eras, the Gandhian times, we go back to this perception again and again that freedom struggle succeeded primarily because it was deeply rooted in our own soil, in our own civilisation, in our own culture. Gandhian vision, and his sources of inspiration were all indigenous. Gandhian sources of inspiration were not alien. They were not imported from other countries; they were born here.

When Gandhiji talked, again and again, of *dharma*; *dharma*, being the basic root of Indian freedom struggle, was something which really brought to our minds and to our struggle a new orientation. Of course, when he talked of *dharma* he meant something different than religion; he meant something different than cult; he meant something different than, what we commonly call, the Church. He meant *dharma* in a wider definition. I am one of those who believe, and I think this House also believes, that one word which cannot be translated into any non-Indian language is the word *dharma*. That was where Gandhi went home.

Gandhiji never tried to build a cult. He never tried to build a *math*. It was basically an approach that was based on compassion more than anything else. In this, when we look back at Gandhiji, his perceptions, his vision, his way of conducting things more and more, an idea comes to my mind, and that is, his compassion often reminded of the Great Buddha. To me, he brought continuity of that compassion which Buddha spelt out for the whole world. Very often, the ideas and ideals that were originally in Gandhian thinking were so unfamiliar to us. Sometimes they bewildered us and sometimes they gave a new

interpretation and a new meaning to those very words. He started thinking differently on one wider scale of the nation. It is a remarkable thing that Gandhiji used old idioms, old dictums and old words that we have been used to; gave them a new meaning and used them for mobilisation, for mass upsurge. Some people who thought that they were intellectually bright at that time were bewildered. Sometimes they were confused because they were not really prepared to see that old idioms could be given new meanings of the type that Gandhiji was giving them.

As our mass upsurge turned into a tide and achieved what it did, the Indian freedom struggle fully appreciated the civilisational unity of India. The main quest of the Indian civilisation always was built on respecting diversities—the vast diversities that we in our lives experienced and continue to experience, different languages, different cultures, different historical experiences, different ways of life—and yet to find a strain where they all join. Gandhiji's basic contribution was to rediscover the unity of those diversities. This continues to be the benchmark of our nation. This, in these fifty years, we have learnt. We have, again and again, said that our liberation struggle achieved what it did because of this perception. If Gandhiji at that time had emphasised one thing, or had emphasised one religion, or had emphasised one way of life, the struggle would never have succeeded; India would never have been unified.

Therefore, we must repeat to ourselves, Sir, and with your permission I must submit to the House, that this unity of diversities is the flag that must continue to fly high on the strong mast of Indian liberation. This is the basic thing.

We do mistake in that sometimes. Sometimes we feel that, perhaps, uniformity is more important than unity of diversities. This nation, may I repeat in all humility, will never remain united, will never remain together; if we start trying to cast it in the mould of uniformity. We must respect our languages; we must respect our ways of life; we must respect our religions; we must respect our beliefs; we must respect our historical experiences. Then, and then only will this nation be able to continue to call itself with pride, a nation that is called India.

Indian nation is again a nation of diversities. That is the challenge, if I may say so, for the next 50 years or a century, that is before us. If we are able to recognise this fact, then we do not get lost in the bylanes of trying to emphasise one way of life or one language or one religion, then we will never lose our way. If we do not that mistake will be very expensive for us. Sometimes political myopia, sometimes expediency of a particular movement, a particular election compulsion, may blind us and may try to emphasise one

caste or one religion or one language to get votes. I think, one determination that must emerge from this House today is that we shall never let that happen.

Once we are able to emphasise that we have our diversities which we respect, that we have our different ways of living, that we have our different faiths and therefore, we shall respect each other. We shall not read on other's toes. We shall not try to do things which can possibly hurt the feelings and the emotions of another fellow Indian. We always talk in terms of India first and Indian first. Yes, 'India first and Indian first' is a product of this perception and it is a way of life. If we respect each other, if we do not try to break our perceptions, hearts and minds, than India's future will always be secured. This is the pitfall against which we must guard the *mantra*, if I may say so. I am not a *pundit* in the sense Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee is, but let me say that the *mantra*, to my mind, of a great unified India that stands on the threshold of greatness is three-fold: accommodate, tolerate, respect diversities—and also discreetly mix continuity and change. Continuity is important because without continuity there can be stagnation. Our languages, our music, our poetry, our philosophies are all invigorated in the bygone centuries in the past and will continue to do so if we have the capacity to assimilate and adjust.

Years ago, an Urdu poet said:

"Unan-O-Misra Roma
Sab Mit Gaye Jahan Sey
Kutch Bat hai ki hasti
Mitati Nahi Hamari."

What is that which has preserved us? What is this *kuch baat*? I hope, we will always keep in mind that this *kuch baat* is this unification of diversities, respecting, the process of assimilation, courage to assimilate, courage to reject what we do not want and the courage to assimilate what helps us. This invigorated our cultures in the past and will continue to do so. And that is why, I feel, this is very important, that we should discover this *kuch baat*, at every stage of our growth—today; yesterday, we did it; tomorrow, we must continue. To quote Iqbal :

[Translation]

'Kutch bat hey key hasti mitati nahi hamari'

[English]

This is the legacy of our past and this is the challenge for future. This challenge, I think, we have made by

continuing rediscovering ourselves, by continuing interpreting ourselves, by continuing redefining ourselves, by continuing invigorating ourselves, at the same time, keeping our feet firmly in our soil, in our tradition, in our civilisation.

That is very important. No change, as Nehru used to say, must throw us of our feet. No change must be such that we give up our roots. No change must be such it takes us away from our civilisation. At the same time, we should have the capacity. Yes, we had in the past to try to imbibe what you think is in our interest. The world today is now standing or has already entered a new era of change. Unprecedented, never seen in the history of mankind, the technological change, the change ushered in by science. All through the history of man, ever since he was born, I do not think this kind of experience has ever been made. Therefore, now at this stage, we must decide for the future to come and this is my plea to you, Sir, and to the House.

India must decide that in the era of new change of technology of science, India must occupy a vanguard position, must be standing on the front benches, must stand in the front rows, imbibe new technology because new creativeness must be born out of this. Out of this new creativity shall India once again be great India that has always been.

Therefore, on these new frontiers of sciences, new frontiers of technology, new thoughts must be generated, new ideas must be born and new discoveries must be made. That is how we can also accept the challenge and also use it as our opportunities. Only this alone will facilitate, I repeat alone this one, our courage, our vision, our determination to occupy the front ranks of this change, shall we be able to occupy a position which will facilitate India crossing over the threshold.

India today stands on the threshold of greatness and that greatness is within our reach, within our grasp. We can do it and we must. That is a challenge for the next Century or, if I may say so, for next fifty years.

The Prime Minister of Malaysia had come here once. He had said, "The challenge is of 20:20". He was talking metaphorical and also, in a way, talking in terms of vision. After all the best eyesight in the world is 20:20. That is why 20:20 challenge we also have to accept. That 20:20 is a challenge of technology and is a challenge of change. Therefore, that discreet change must be the objective that India must, now, follow.

We must keep in mind, at the same time, Sir, that the social intellectual objectives of this nation is not to watch only with wonder what others are doing; it is not only to see

that somebody has landed on the Moon; and it is not only to read in the newspapers that we can also get if others have gone into satellite technology. We have to do it ourselves. This drama of change, of big change, that the world is seeing must be imbibed, not only by a few scientists, not only by a few hundred of those who go to the technological institutions and not only even by few thousands but I think the challenge before us is that the *Laxman Rekha* must be crossed by the entire nation in totality. Unless the entire nation crosses it and enters into an era of technology, the nation will not really be able to gain its position. When I talk of the entire nation, I particularly talk of the youth.

Youth are a majority in this country. They are exposed to new education. They are exposed to new technology. It is the duty of this Government, it is the duty of this Parliament, it is the duty of all of us collectively to facilitate that youth gets into this new era of science and technology, not only the youth the women also.

The most backward section of our society is women. Through education, through giving them their due, through empowerment of women, we can facilitate that they are also able to walk into this new era of change and, particularly, apart from women, those sections of society which for centuries are suffering from bondage of backwardness. For centuries and centuries, society has been unfair to them. Since centuries and centuries, the society has not given them their due. Today, when it is technologically feasible, when scientifically it is possible to banish poverty and backwardness, all of us must move together.

If I am asked, what is the challenge before the nation today, I would spell it like this. Backwardness can be and must be banished, socially, economically and technologically. If we are able to do these three things, then of course, we will be able to take and show it to the entire nation the daylight. Exposure to a new light is a challenge for the future.

This is all inclusive vision—and I am saying it all inclusive—that inclusive means all sections of society, all communities, all religions, all areas of our life and all genders of our life—we must be exposed to this.

With this as a central point, all our policies regarding our education, social policies, political policies and policies on social change and social justice must be borne out of this basic perception. Once this basic perception is clear, then policy making is a matter of detail. If you are confused in this objective, then policies are also greatly confused. The details, of course, can be worked out. Details can be discussed in this august body and House and changes can be effected.

When I talk in terms of expanding frontiers of science and technology, I am also conscious that a new generation is also occupying our lives and this new scenario is also having both positive and negative impacts on us.

We all talk of satellite. We all talk of television. We all talk of the programmes that we have been exposed to. This is not for me at this stage or at least this morning to try to spell out what our media policy should be. But I would also like to keep in mind the fact that Satellites, TVs, various dimensions of telecommunications and also the transport and travel are determining and influencing change in us. Attitudinal change is coming. The change is coming in social relationship. The change is coming in looking at each other that India also like the rest of the world has shrunk in size. Travelling has made it easier. Telephones have made it easier. The fax has made it much easier and so on and so forth. Now these social relationships are dramatic. The change is coming in the lives of all of us. When I say 'all' I mean all. Even those sections of society which are deprived, change is coming in them also. And that change spells itself in various ways sometimes in the shape of demands and sometimes in the shape of agitations. But this exposure to new world is now making its impacts. Sometimes, this impact is not positive, sometimes it affects negatively our cultures, sometimes, it negatively affects our ways of life, sometimes, it makes both positive and negative impact on our languages, on our music and on our literature. Sometimes, it is gainful, as I said and sometimes it is negative and partly harmful.

Therefore, when we review our cultural policies, when we review our educational policies, all these policies must try to be discreet—how much to change and how much to imbibe and how much not to imbibe. That is where the collective wisdom of this House will be very helpful.

It is not possible for one person, it is not possible even for a few in the Cabinet to try to visualise the entire drama. At a much wider scale, it is to be discussed, in this House and outside the House, amongst the intelligentsia, amongst the intellectuals, amongst the social organisations and amongst all the NGOs. They must tell us all the time. And this interaction basically is a real meaning of democracy. This interaction all the time is very important that we keep on focussing our minds on it.

But at the same time, when I pointed out that there can be some harmful impacts also, I must repeat with all the strength that I can, that we must under no circumstances—and I repeat—under no circumstances, shut our windows. We must not come to a stage when we close our minds.

India has never done it. All through our civilisation of history, the importance of India has been that it has always

kept its windows open. Last time, when poet Tagore said that famous song we all remember "keep your windows open. Let the winds come in. Know how to imbibe them." Gandhiji said the same thing. That is the *mantra* again for us for the future. Therefore, while determining the media policies, education policies, economic policies, we must know how to deliberate and also talk in terms of change, discrete change imbibing whatever we think is good for us, assimilating whatever we can.

India has never, in its entire history, been a rejectionist. India has never been a rejectionist. India has always been on the side of assimilation. Look at the fate of our music, look at our own languages, look at Hindi and Urdu's worth. Anything that I look at, I think it is a demonstration and manifestation, all the time, of our capacity to imbibe, taking and rejecting whatever was not good for us.

I have deliberately at this stage not mentioned the impact all this has on the foreign policy. I have talked of cultural policy, I have talked of educational policy and, I have talked of media policy.

But, particularly, when I talk of foreign policy, I feel that the history of our civilisation has also been, as I said, non-rejectionist. But, at the same time, it has been open to the world. Whether I talk of today or I talk of yesteryears, India always was in the world vision. I cannot recall any phase in the long Indian history when India did not have a world vision. If it is the era of Ashoka, he was a person who talked in terms of sending a message of Buddha across the world. If we think in terms of any change in our society, we always, viewed ourselves as a part of the world and as a part of that outlook. Our nation-state—I emphasise about nation-state—when I say that, though our nation-state was born on 15th August, 1947, the Indian civilisation was much longer; the national perception was much longer; our commonalities and visions were much longer and, therefore, we had always imbibed the ideas, thoughts and philosophies from giving to the world and taking from the world. The uniqueness of this phenomena was that all the time that India walked on a two-way stick. It let others come in; it also went out. That is why, India, all the time, gave to the world and brought the world to India.

When I think of Khusro or think of even further that, I always think in the sense that India was open to the world and world was open to India. That has been the basis of our perceptions. We have never confined to an era in the 5,000 years of our civilisation when different forms, different idioms were not used for this purpose going out to the world and taking to the world inside us. Primarily because of this, the Indian civilisation was invigorated. *(Interruptions)*

The interesting contour of our Indian civilisation, If I may say so, was an in-built resilience and all the resilience was that we did reject whatever was not suitable to us. We did take in whatever we think was good for us. But at no stage in our history we let others overwhelm us. This process of assimilation and defiance was simultaneous. All the time, we knew where to defy and also, at the same time, we knew where to take in situations.

Of course, the eras were different than today. The communications methodology was different. One had to walk to distant lands and the letters were also sent on the horseback. That is the time consuming factor. The result of it was that the focus of, Indian sub-continent was proliferated. In the north of the continent, we interacted more with the landmass of Central Asia. We did that all historically. We mostly remained oblivious of the dangers coming from that side of the seas and not remained oblivious of these things.

I have been reminded of an incident when Aurangzeb's family wanted to go to Mecca. He had to take visa from the Portuguese from Surat. It did not occur to him that the seas around India also belonged to the Indian Empire. No, it did not. Similarly, we see that the military power was also not maritime oriented of the North. The South, on the contrary, went the other way. All States of the South were more conscious of the seas. Presumably, in Calicut, for instance, they were able to push back the Portuguese for nearly the best part of the century because it was a marine power. Also, in a cultural sphere, the South interacted more to the East, the Buddhist message going to other far-off areas like, Indonesia, Japan and China.

They had marine consciousness. But, at the same time, their security perception was not land conscious. And that is why there was a strange dilemma to see and perceive by both sides. The North was not sea conscious and the South was not so much land conscious. They both suffered in different ways. And that is how the sovereignty suffered. I think this myopia also ignored that the sea is now becoming increasingly important. As technology came, as the steamship came and as other technologies started coming in, it became more and more important for this sub-continent to see that ultimately the sea power matters. But, even more important than that, and I think more important for us, is to keep in mind in the present days the preparedness of our war machines. India, unfortunately, never became conscious of the fact that wars are not fought only with valour, they are also fought with technologies. And that is why when the Northerners and the across the sea powers started coming in, their war machines and war technologies were different than we had. We had all the valour but we were always one step backward.

At the time when Babar came, that was one manifestation. The time when the British came, that was another manifestation. When the Portuguese came, that was one more manifestation. Therefore, may I submit that this House may decide with determination and with commitment that this shall never happen again. In technology we shall never be left behind. Our valoured armies, our brave armies, our brave forces, shall always be given the latest in technology that the security of India demands. This historical lesson we have learnt and this lesson of history we shall never forget. And that is why it is important that wherever we go, we must keep in mind that when on the cultural level we can keep our minds open, when we can keep on spreading the message of our civilisation, at the same time, on the level of security also we must keep our mind open.

Our foreign policy must keep in mind the fact that only those foreign policies ultimately succeed which is security conscious and are vigilant. And security is a wider conception. It is not only arms, it is also inner stability. It is also food security, it is also security of inter-relationship. If the armies are going to be involved more and more in our internal squabbles, then our security becomes dangerous. If our internal peace is not secured, then the defence becomes very vulnerable. If we keep on quarreling amongst ourselves, we become a tempting target of those who want to come in. And that is why the broader concept of security is important. The main features of that broader concept of security, may I repeat, are technologically updating ourselves, unifying the nation all the time, trying to see to it that our inner squabbles do not reach that stage when armies have to be involved inside and also, at the same time, economic stability and economic social justice. Social justice is not only a matter of social justice, it is also a matter of security. Any socially unjust society can never be secure. Therefore, it is very important for us to keep in mind that when we talk in terms of social justice, it also has a defence orientation.

Some of us who are in my generation will remember that in our school and college days, we read the *Discovery of India* written by Nehruji, which he wrote without reference to any text book or to any reference book in the narrow cells of the jail. He reminded us all the time of two things. He reminded of India which had inherent strength, he reminded of India which had cultural roots in the soil, he reminded of India of the change that India was undergoing, he reminded of India which had the capacity to change with the times. Therefore, it was only till the colonial era came that this problem became very difficult. The civilisation and unity of India was disturbed by the foreign colonial rulers who came from the West and, therefore, the Westerners

not only tried to destroy our civilisation and unity but it continued till we got back our courage to defy them. Once the defiance came and once our determination was roused by Gandhiji, we defied it continuously and the same process continued—both assimilation and defiance.

When I talk of Raja Rammohan Roy or I talk of Tagore or I talk of Sir Syed Ali, all these added one chapter or the other—assimilation and defiance. And that is how India's struggle took a new shape. When I think of Gandhiji and Tagore particularly, I think they were twins. They were twins in many ways and I am not going to quote what Tagore wrote nor I am going to draw your attention. But Tagore had one vision and that vision always was that he thought narrow nationalism is not the future of India. He always emphasised the humanism, the humanistic message of India. Two days back I was speaking in Shanti Niketan. Shri Somnath Chatterjee was there. In Shanti Niketan I reminded them of the famous novel which Tagore wrote that is *Ghare Baire*. ...(*Interruptions*)

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS : It is *Ghare Baire*.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Excuse me for bad Bengali pronunciation.

When he wrote over this, he always tried to remind us that even in the upsurge of nationalism we must not forget the world. And that was what Tagore told us. Gandhiji in his 'Experiments with Truth', that began in South Africa, opened a new dimension for us. A while ago I have said that we were conscious of Central Asia, we were conscious of some parts of the sea and when the British came, the Portuguese came and the French came, we were conscious of Europe.

Gandhiji added a new dimension to our knowledge—dark South Africa's role. We were not conscious of it till Gandhiji came on the scene. Gandhiji, I have said at other place, was physically born in India but politically he was born in South Africa. And, therefore, he now forged a new link between those hopelessly, helplessly struggling dark dimensions of the African soil with our freedom struggle. This became a part of our freedom struggle. Gandhiji and also Nehru particularly further opened our windows wider. Spanish civil war was going on. It looked very strange to some of us at that time when he decided to send a mission to Spanish civil war—all before freedom. China was struggling. Kotnis was sent. When we think of Russia he talked and saw of Soviet Union a new experiment in civilisation. It may succeed, it may fail. That was a different issue altogether. But he saw in that a political expression of social justice and also the world was brought close to us. They, both of them together, divided the world into two—the

world of the oppressor and the world of the oppressed. And our sides were very clear. From day one in the freedom struggle itself we were on the side and a natural ally of those who were oppressed. When Nazism came and Tagore tried and wrote his famous poem which I will not read again, because of paucity of time. But Tagore gave a message that those coming from Japan, trying to profess Buddhism, the compassionate Buddhism and treading in the civilisation of China, he raised protest against them. So did Nehru; so did Gandhi. That is how the freedom struggle's basic purpose and basic vision was spelt.

Sir, this rising Indian freedom struggle, since you were born 15 days after the 15th August, I must remind you, rose on the ashes of Nazism, it rose on the ashes of Fascism, it rose on the ashes of militaries and, therefore, there is a strange type of link that we have with the forces of peace. Nehru and Gandhiji together convened the first Asia Conference before even we became formally free. What was the message? The basic message was that we are all on the side of those who are still colonised. And the last de-colonisation which has been done now, the last but one perhaps, in a small way is the transfer of Hong Kong.

As Prime Minister here, I received an invitation from the Chinese to participate in that function in Hong Kong. We also received invitation from the British. We responded to the invitation of China. The British was a liquidation of empire. We have no sympathy with them.

We had all sympathies with the liquidation of imperialism in Hong Kong. With Hong Kong, we have one more link. After all, the opium war was fought from the Indian soil. What was the opium war about? Those who today protest against drugs, they forget that they went to war on the issue that British India must continue to have a right to transport, export opium to China. That was a war and therefore, they took over Hong Kong. Therefore, we have a great sympathy and great admiration for those who have ultimately liquidated that.

The Asia Conference, as I said, was a message against colonisation. It was a message against war, it was a message against camps. That is how our foreign policy was born. Our foreign policy, and I think my worthy colleague Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao has spelt out himself, was not made in a book. It did not come out of any text-book; it came out of the experience of the freedom struggle. Therefore, out of this, we were able to learn three lessons.

There were three messages from those who were responsible for making it at one stage or the other. The first one is to stay free, keep Indian foreign policy free, independent, do not give in and keep your chin up all the

time. I state with pride that in these 50 years, that has been done. No pressure on any Government, this one or the one preceding it, has ever succeeded on cowing down India. The second message, was 'always stand with the oppressed'. We have stood with the oppressed. The third message was 'always oppose tyranny wherever it is, and be always on the side of the peace'. Diplomacy in Indian history had a purpose. And the purpose was to transform diplomacy and not to transact.

[Translation]

There was no bargaining. Indian Foreign policy never entered into any negotiations.

[English]

It had never tried to give and take. It had stood for transformation of the attitudes, transformation of the world relationships, and never tried to transact. We always had ideals. Ideas are input but ideals have always been preserved. Therefore, on this, we built the concept of non-alignment. The non-alignment gave us new friends, those who had a colonial experience, those who had passed through difficult times, those who were victims of apartheid, colour victims, and also those who were standing on that side and I am particularly referring to the Soviet Union.

In the new phase that began on 15th August, 1947, we continued the same policies. We always stood on these basic things, whether it was Vietnam, whether it was Korea, whether it was China or South Africa. I can go on counting. There are numerous countries. Every time, our vision was clear. Our courage was our best ally. We never minded isolation because isolation does not decide it. Very often, we paid the price also, but all the same we never gave in. The Cold War did cause us difficulties. Therefore, we were misunderstood also. But the worst thing that happened to our region was that in this region of ours, tensions were imposed. Tensions were not born in, tensions were imposed in this region by arms and by everything else. Therefore, this was done all the time and that continues to cause us difficulties. We believe and the Indian foreign policy believes, not today but always, in the unity, friendship and cooperation of South Asia and we are trying to form that policy. We were partitioned geographically, physically but at the same time, this diversion is something which was furthered when the strategic perceptions underwent a change. Indian strategic perception was different than the one that was imposed from outside.

I am not going to take more of your time, Sir, but I would also say at the same time that the end of the Cold War now gives and imposes new challenges and new

opportunities also. The world has not suddenly become peaceful. It is not. At the same time, the globalisation and regionalisation are the two things that have come to the fore and we see them sleeping in the same bed. We have to have a global vision, but we have also to have regional initiatives. That is what we are trying to do. The next century is generally believed to be the Asian century. That is where the opportunity for India comes.

And that is where we now have to play our role. That anchor frame of Indian policy, therefore, is SAARC friendship and cooperation. We have succeeded in creating new relationships with Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. About Pakistan, I refer in a minute. ASEAN is now our neighbour. By Myanmar joining the ASEAN, even our land borders have joined. Therefore, our neighbourly relations have to be inculcated there also. Similarly, Indian Ocean Rim Association is now our neighbour and we are now a founder member of that Association. The trilateral treaty between Turkmenistan, India and Iran now gives us a new access into Central Asia and we must build on that also.

In keeping with our firm approach of building strong ties of friendship and cooperation with all our neighbouring countries, we have always sought a relationship of mutual trust, friendship and cooperation with Pakistan. The resumption of Foreign Secretary level dialogue was a step in that direction. As hon. Members are aware, a joint statement was issued at the conclusion of Islamabad round talks in June. The next round is now due in Delhi in September and we have suggested the dates to Pakistan. Their response is awaited. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharief and I will be in New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly Session and if opportunity comes my way, I will be happy to meet him. Hon. Members will recall that I had a useful meeting with him in Male in May last.

Sir, I will take a minute more, before I conclude, to say something that I must say in passing. The relationship of India with the United States of America, the countries of Europe, Japan, China and Russia continues to be very steady and very friendly. The only thing that I would like to say here is that our relations with the United States of America are improving and a series of visits to India from Washington are planned for the coming months. As hon. Members are aware, President Clinton is also expected to visit India sometime next year. I have also received a proposal from the American side for a meeting with President Clinton in New York during the forthcoming Session of the United Nations General Assembly. While considering this proposal, I made it clear to the Americans that India-Pakistan relations and attempts at mediation between India and

Pakistan are not to be on the agenda, a position which the Americans have accepted. I wish to reassure the House that the secular unity and integrity of India is not open to negotiations.

There is much to be discussed between two largest democracies in the world and if meeting takes place, I am looking forward to a friendly and substantive discussion with President Clinton which will focus on our bilateral ties and also on issues of common interests relating to Asia-Pacific Region, in particular.

Sir, if time had permitted I would have addressed various issues. But I cannot restrain from referring to one issue which my friend Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has talked about. It is about corruption and criminalisation of politics. During the course of his speech, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee had regretted that there was a delay in bringing the Lok Pal Bill before Parliament. He also suggested that all political leaders should be required to declare their assets, including those of their relatives. As hon. Members are aware, the Lok Pal Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on the 13th September, 1996. The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament on Home Affairs which has since submitted its report. The recommendations of the Standing Committee are under consideration of the Government. A revised Bill, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee, will be introduced in the forthcoming Session of Parliament. Let us hope this law will be a significant step towards cleaning our polity and the evil of corruption.

Sir, Shri Vajpayee, referring to a news item in the Press, mentioned that 194 proposal of the C.B.I. for sanction of prosecution were pending in the Prime Minister's Office.

14.00 hrs.

The factual position is that not even one is pending in the Prime Minister's Office. But all the same, there were 157 CBI proposals pending with different Central Ministries and State Governments. Out of these, 141 were pending with the Central Ministers. As a part of the drive against corruption, a special effort has been made to speed up the issue of sanction for prosecution in public servants involved in corruption cases. The Government of India has brought down the number of cases from 141, at the end of March 1997, to 79 at present. All Secretaries to the Government of India have been given strict instructions to clear the backlog within 15 days and to ensure that all fresh cases are decided in a month's time. There has also been concern expressed about the quality of investigation and follow-up of corruption cases in the courts. Measures to improve the present state of affairs including the setting up of an institutional mechanism in the Government is also being

finalised. The Government is taking steps to review and streamline the existing vigilance procedures in consultation with the State Governments as to ensure that corruption cases are disposed of expeditiously in a time-bound manner. In pursuance, a Conference of the Heads of the Anti-Corruption Bureau of States and the Vigilance Officers of various public undertakings has been fixed for 4th and 5th of September, that is, in two days' from now. This will be followed by a Conference of Chief Ministers.

Regarding transparency, the Government constituted a Working Group under the Chairmanship of Shri H.D. Shourie on Right to Information. We intend introducing the Right to Information Bill in the next Session of Parliament.

I will not take your time to dwell at length about the electoral reforms because I think that enjoys the consensus of the House. I will soon come with a Bill before an all-party meeting so that we can evolve a new consensus on this and come to a conclusion.

I could have talked about many other things, but I know the limitations of time. If you permit me, Sir, I will place them on the Table of the House.

MR. SPEAKER : Please do so. Thank you very much.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (Hooghly) : Sir, will you give me half-a-minute.

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARTI (Khajuraho) : The Prime Minister did not mention about the reservation policy for women.

[English]

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Let me finish....(Interruptions)

SHRI MRUTYUNJAYA NAYAK (Phulbani) : Sir, the Prime Minister, who is also the Foreign Minister, has forgotten one very important point. He has forgotten to mention about India's concern to stake its claim for membership in the Security Council. This matter has been discussed in the Congress Party. The Prime Minister is going to America and Mr. Clinton is also coming to India....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARTI : Mr. Prime Minister, please tell about the reservation for women.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : This is not the way. Please do not spoil the solemnity of this occasion. It is not possible for the Prime Minister to mention everything.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, with your permission, I am lying on the Table of the House the notes that I have on Cooperative Federalism, on Planning: Its structural role in the context of liberalisation, on Food Security and Public Distribution System, on Water Resources and Drinking Water, on Education and Literacy, on Population Issues, on Policy Initiatives in Infrastructure Development, on Biodiversity, on the Panchayati Raj Institutions, and also on Social Justice that we have followed. This, I think, will help the Members because I may not be able to take more time.

Sir, my hon. friend has raised one point. (Interruptions)
Let me finish and then I will come to you. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister may please elucidate upon criminalisation of politics.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : Sir, this is not proper.

MR. SPEAKER : Order please.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying that I think the House and the Nation has benefited a lot from these discussions. Let me repeat what I said and pay my complement and homage to all the Members of Parliament, both in this House and that, with the remarkable way this discussion has been conducted. This was unusual in one way more. We were not having repartee, and we were not trying to cross swords here. We were all trying to present our vision of future.

I think it is the collective vision of the future of the nation.

Notes Laid on the Table of the House by the Prime Minister while summing up the discussion on the Motion moved by Shri A.B. Vajpayee

I. Co-operative Federalism

The emergence of multi-party system has necessarily led to different parties or coalition of parties coming to power