

MR. SPEAKER: The convention does not detract from the merit of the motions which the hon. Member proposes to move. If he will have the patience, he will observe the convention and, after the President's Address he will move all these motions.

11.15 hrs.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER: Shrimati Indira Gandhi may now move the motion.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI): Sir, I beg to move:

"That Shri Bal Ram, a Member of this House, be chosen as the Speaker of this House."

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Bali Ram Bhagat may second the motion.

SHRI BALI RAM BHAGAT (Sitamarhi): I second the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Narayan Datt Tiwary may now move the motion standing in his name.

श्री नारायण दत्त तिवारी (नेनीताल) :
श्रीमान् मैं प्रस्ताव करता हूँ :

"कि श्री बल राम को, जो इस सभा के सदस्य हैं, इस सभा का अध्यक्ष चुना जाये।"

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (Shri P. Shiv Shankar): I second the motion.

MR. SPEAKER: I shall now put the first motion that is, the motion moved by Shrimati Indira Gandhi and seconded by Shri Bali Ram Bhagat to the vote of the House.

The question is:

"That Shri Bal Ram, a Member of this House, be chosen as the Speaker of this House."

Those in favour may say "Aye".

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against may say "No".

I think the Ayes have it; the Ayes have it. The motion is unanimously adopted.

The motion was adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare Shri Bal Ram duly elected as the Speaker of the House. Now, I have great pleasure in inviting Shri Bal Ram to occupy the Chair.

(Shri Bal Ram was conducted to the Chair by the Prime Minister and Shri Charan Singh.)

[MR. SPEAKER (SHRI BAL RAM) in the Chair]

15.18 hrs.

FELICITATIONS TO THE SPEAKER

THE PRIME MINISTER (Shrimati Indira Gandhi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I congratulate you on your assumption of the high office of Speaker. May I also take this opportunity of extending my congratulations to all Hon'ble Members of the House on their elections?

Sir, traditionally today is the first day of spring, a day of new beginnings, a day devoted to learning and to culture. It is a coincidence that your election, Mr. Speaker, has taken place today. But that does not detract from the day or the event; rather it gives it added significance.

India is known for its adherence to the ancient. Yet, it is ever ready to meet new situations and new challenges. In a fast-changing world, the need is for a fresh outlook, not just periodical or occasional but constant and continuing.

You, Sir, are a son of the soil with personal experience of the difficulties of the largest section of our people, one on which we are all dependent for our survival. The Indian farmer is known not only for his sound

common sense and practical approach but also for his devotion to our land. You have also wide knowledge of men and matters and are known for your culture and your courtesy. The present task is new to you just as membership of this august House is new to many of us.

I am sure you will soon find your way amongst the maze of rules and regulations and conventions and give fair and impartial treatment to all sections of the House. But let us not lose sight of two facts: one, that the rules are there not for themselves but to facilitate the functioning of the House; and secondly, that the purpose of this House is not merely to have discussions and debates, or indulge in verbal battles but to serve the people by attempting sincerely to find solutions for their multifarious and pressing problems.

The Speaker is the custodian of the noble traditions of the House. It is his task to uphold the dignity of this august House. Although my Party has the great privilege of enjoying a large majority, we expect no favours. We realise the importance of the Opposition. The Opposition must have its due. But I do hope that this does not mean obstructing the Government from discharging its onerous duties. We are here to do a job which has no parallel in size or complexity anywhere in the wide world. We seek the cooperation of all.

Once again, on behalf of the House and on my own behalf, I offer good wishes to the Speaker and assure him of our fullest cooperation.

SHRI CHARAN SINGH (Baghat): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I congratulate you sincerely on your election today to the Speakership of this august House. In the success of Parliamentary institutions, your office plays a pivotal role. It depends on how the Speaker conducts the proceedings of the House. If order is maintained impartially and strictly, I believe we

will be able to conduct our proceedings with benefit to public good and public interest. If, as during recent times, an impression gets round the country that the proceedings of the House are not always conducted with dignity and decorum, then it will tend to denigrate the dignity of the House. We hope you will carry out your duties with strictness and impartiality and maintain order so that everybody has his opportunity to say whatever he likes to say.

Perhaps I need not add that the first condition of a debate in any institution, in any Convention or Conference, is that nobody is allowed to attribute motives to another man. Once motives are attributed, then the atmosphere gets degenerated, heat is developed and threats are also sometimes made, etc. I hope you will forget, while in the Chair, that you are a Member of any particular Party and regard yourself as a custodian of the rights and privileges of the House as a whole. Particularly, I have every hope that you will take special care to protect the rights of the Opposition. The ruling Party is in a majority and I hope that the ruling Party itself will take care to see that the rights of the Opposition are not turned down by the majority. But if this happens, we can look up to you alone to safeguard our rights. In the interpretation of Rules and also in other matters, some rights lie in your hands. If there are certain things which are not mentioned in the Rules, then the final say in regard to those matters also lies in the hands of the Speaker. We hope you will try to see, as I have already said, that the rights of the Opposition are not trampled upon by the sheer majority of the ruling Party.

With these words, I again congratulate you on your election to this high office.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah): Sir, I congratulate you on being elected uncontested to this high office. A new Government has

come into power, but with an old background: that is why we have great apprehensions. This Parliament also has a background. We have passed through a very turbulent atmosphere inside this Parliament, and I think your job will not be very easy. It will be a very difficult job to maintain impartiality, decency and decorum in this House.

Our Parliamentary democracy is now under very great stress and strain and, outside, I see that the toppling business is going on. Unfortunately, one of the Cabinet Ministers very recently gave a call that in West Bengal the Left Front Government should be thrown into the Bay of Bengal. (*Interruptions*). I do not know whether it strengthens democracy or not, but it means ultra-democratic forces will be engineered to achieve that objective. Parliament is the highest forum where the grievances of the people should get reflected. So, if the situation outside goes out of control, naturally, we representing the people from outside—a section of the people, you may call it—may also get infected by the atmosphere outside. That is why a strong and purely impartial authority is necessary so that in conditions of a peaceful atmosphere the discussions can take place here. So, keeping in mind the atmosphere outside, I hope you will fully utilise your high office to keep perfect impartiality, decency and decorum of this House. Otherwise, the parliamentary democracy will be in danger.

I extend full co-operation in discharging your duty on behalf of our Party and the people we represent and I hope that you will prove equal to your responsibilities and discharge all your noble duties impartially. With this, I conclude.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA (Bombay North): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Janata Party I rise to join the Leader of the House and the other hon. Members who have congratulated you on your elevation to this high

Mr. Speaker, you are entering to-day on the responsibilities of a high office which is hallowed by the traditions of the parliamentary system, by symbolic significance as a repository of the rights of the people who are pledged to govern themselves, by its unflinching determination to uphold the rights and dignity of the Parliament as a whole as well as every Member of Parliament who has been elected to represent the sovereign people of this country, by its willingness, as instanced in history, to suffer martyrdom rather than to permit or to suffer incursions or indignities of the rights of the House.

You are succeeding to a line which is the lifeline of the parliamentary system in any country. You are succeeding to a line in our country which can boast of many hon. Speakers who have blazed a trail as far as the rights of the people and as far as the resistance of the people to those who wanted to snuff out the rights of the people are concerned.

Sir, to-day you have been elected the Speaker of this House unanimously. You have ceased to belong to the majority. To-day you belong to us, the House of the People. The responsibilities that you will undertake will undoubtedly be onerous, especially in the present situation in our country. On behalf of my Party I would like to assure you that you will have the fullest co-operation from every Member of our Party in your attempt to discharge your onerous responsibility. It will be upto you to hold the scales even and to ensure that every Member of this House enjoys the same rights in this House and outside.

In a House, in a Parliament, numbers do matter as we know to our cost. But even so, I would like to submit that it is the responsibility of the Speaker to ensure that numbers are not used to snuff out or swamp the rights of every individual member of this House.

It was said—you are perhaps new to this House and there are many hon. Members who are new to this House—that it is not so much the past which matters when you occupy that Chair but it is your response to the relentless challenges and responsibilities that you have inherited while occupying that Chair.

Sir, on behalf of my party, once again I assure the fullest cooperation and I wish you well in the task on which you have embarked today.

SHRI C. T. DHANDAPANI (Pol-lachi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the DMK party I take this opportunity to congratulate and felicitate you on your choice as Speaker of this august House.

Sir, I am indeed happy to know that you have been a champion of the cause of the down-trodden and the poor people. I also know that you have discharged your duties without fear and favour when you were occupying the office of minister in your State.

Sir, a suitable person is being elevated to a suitable place and at a suitable time as well. The recent landslide victory is a manifestation of political polarisation in which DMK believes. The people of this country have voted for a stable and sensible government and, I hope, this House under your guidance and leadership will fulfil this commitment and that it will also continue for a full term.

Sir, the massive mandate given by the country is a complete demolition of individual interest. This clearly shows the ambitions of the people. There is no recognised Opposition party in this House, the simple reason being that the people have not recognised them as Opposition. So, only Groups are functioning here. It is in these circumstances, Sir, that your job will be very difficult. It is an established fact that the Speaker is a symbol of impartiality and should wield his authority with the complete neutrality of an impartial judge. At

the same time, many issues may arise in this House about legalities, constitutional aspects and technicalities. In that case when you give your ruling I request you, Sir, that you should also take into consideration the aspirations and ambitions of the people who are expecting many things from this House. Mere technicalities and constitutional aspects will not satisfy the common man. After saying all this, I once again congratulate you and assure you on behalf of the DMK party that the DMK group in Parliament will certainly maintain dignity, decency and decorum in this House. Once again I congratulate you on behalf of the DMK party.

SHRI YESHWANTRAO CHAVAN (Satara): Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to give my hearty congratulation to you on your elevation to this very high office which has very fine traditions for the last more than thirty years. The people who occupied this Chair before you were very distinguished people and today you are joining the ranks of these distinguished people. Therefore, I would like to say: Do well and keep the traditions of this House.

I was reading about you this morning to know more about you and I found one very striking thing, that you were the Leader of the Opposition in Punjab Legislative Assembly. It rather heartened me to hear and read that a man who has got the experience of sitting on this side is occupying that Chair. So, possibly you will not be required to be requested to keep the interest of the Opposition in mind. Sir, as a sitting Member for the last so many years in this House, I would like to tell you one very good thing. I have observed that what is more important to succeed in the Chair is to know the mood of the House and, Sir, that mood of the House reflects the national mood. So, that is very important. So, the first thing is, before you enter the House to know the mood of the House and if you enter the House with the judgement of the mood of the country, possibly that will help you in the

House to get through these difficult times. The functioning of democracy in this country is very valuable for us and very valuable for every one of us, but the functioning of democracy depends upon the functioning of the Lok Sabha; and if it does not function well according to the traditional decorum and decency and other things, then possibly some deterioration in the standards of democratic values is bound to set in.

Therefore, much depends upon your objectivity, how you make the judgment of the situation, judgment of the mood, judgment of the men who are to participate in this House and so on.

I am sure as a good Agriculturist—because I was told that you had been given the Udhyan Pandit award and you are a very good gardener—possibly that quality will be of much help to you here also. You will have to cultivate people, cultivate people sitting particularly on this side of the House if you want to get through rather successfully. Well, all my best wishes. Do well to help the country.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat): Sir, I have great pleasure in associating myself with the sentiments which have been expressed here by other colleagues felicitating you on your election—uncontested election—to this high office.

Sir, other members have made references to the fact that the ruling party enjoys a massive majority, practically a two-thirds majority in this House and they have also made references to the fact that on this side there is no recognised opposition but there are only opposition groups. That is true, but, at the same time I would respectfully request you to remember and to bear in mind always that the ruling party has won these elections securing 42.58 per cent of the total votes cast whereas the opposition, although not unified, have altogether polled 57.42 per cent of the votes. (An hon. Member: Old story) Well, it may be an old story but many old stories have to be related anew. You will bear in mind therefore that the Opposition in

this House has got every claim upon your indulgence, to see that we are given adequate opportunities to exercise our rights here and to express ourselves. (Interruptions) I know that is also an old story about expressing apprehensions of a steam-roller majority and all that. But I hope for our sake and for your sake that those days will never return to this House when Members who have been elected and sent here by the people were placed in a position where they were not able to inform the country about what they were doing and what they were saying here. (An hon. Member: What a shame.) Your predecessor at that time—a good friend of ours whom we respected very much—did plead his helplessness in that situation. We are trying here not only to speak within the walls of this Chamber, but to be heard outside also. There was a time when an authoritarian censorship was imposed in such a way that our speeches and our expressions in this House were cut off from the people outside. Anyway, I trust that good sense will prevail and such things will not recur.

I say this for your sake, Sir, because at that time the Chair was placed in a very difficult position and was not able to safeguard our rights at all. Because this is the first time that we have a Speaker who combines within himself the role of a farmer as well as a scholar. We have had Presiding Officers here who were scholars and we have had Presiding Officers here who were farmers but we never have had a Presiding Officer who was the combination of both farmer and scholar. Sir, you will now have to deal with difficult and complicated situations which may arise from time to time. All I wish to say, Sir, is that you will be responsive not only to the moods in this House but also the moods prevailing outside this House. We are living through stormy times, tempestuous times I should say, and clashes and conflicts on political and economic issues are inevitable outside the House and inside the House where they have to be properly reflected. So, I hope

that with all experience and sagacity which you have acquired, and in the impartiality which you have, which we confidently expect you to exercise in this House, we will be able to see that the proceedings are conducted in a dignified manner and nothing is done which denigrates or discredits parliamentary institutions outside.

With these remarks, Sir, I would once again, on behalf of the Communist Party of India Group, felicitate you and congratulate you on your elevation to this high office.

SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHURI (Berhampore): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to join my voice with the sentiments that have been expressed by the Prime Minister and other distinguished Members of this House to felicitate you on your election to this high office of Speaker. It has already been said that Speakership is the pivotal instrument in a parliamentary institution and it is also a haloed tradition of parliamentary democracy inhabited from the mother of Parliament of Great Britain whose traditions we follow in many respects that the Speaker is the custodian of the rights of the House and that the House also includes the Opposition. As a distinguished Opposition Leader in the Punjab Legislature, you must be knowing and appreciating that while the Government which has a massive majority behind it has the power to administer and run the country in a system of a parliamentary democracy, the voice of the Opposition is also the voice of democracy. I hope, Sir, that under your able guidance that voice will not be stifled and you will allow it to be fully expressed out of the widest ambit of the rules that this House has framed to conduct its business and the conventions that it follows. I do not wish to prolong my speech. I once again offer my heartiest congratulations to you.

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Manjeri): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is my proud privilege to have this opportunity of congratulating you on your unanimous election to the office of

Speaker of the Seventh Lok Sabha. I am happy that a versatile person of your stature has been elected today to this high office. Sir, you are not only a farmer, but I understand, you are a person who has got vast experience in the political field and also as leader of the opposition in the State legislature.

The Prime Minister has described you to be a person of culture and courtesy. I, therefore, hope that you will shine as one of the eminent Speakers of the Lok Sabha in the coming days. You are the custodian of the rights of all Members of Parliament as also the parties here. I hope that all sections of the House and all groups in the Parliament will receive equal treatment, justice and fairplay at your hands. I particularly wish that the smaller groups like us will get better consideration.

Sir, once again, I offer my congratulations to you on behalf of the Muslim League Party in this House and also wish you all success. I also offer you the cooperation of my group in Parliament, the Muslim League Party. I also pray:

“तुम सलामत रहो हजार बरस,
हर बरस के हों दिन पचास हजार।”

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I consider it a great pleasure to associate myself with the other distinguished colleagues of this House, including the Prime Minister, in extending the warmest felicitations to you on this occasion of your elevation to the high office of the Speaker of this great House.

Sir, your office is not only an exalted one, but the repository of great faith and responsibility. You have got the onus of preserving the decency and decorum of this great House: you have the onus of safeguarding, protecting and preserving the existing rights and privileges of the House as a whole and also individual Members of this House. On you rests the responsibility not only of preserving the rich traditions

we have inherited in this House, but to further extend and enrich them. On you rests the responsibility to ensure meaningful and purposeful deliberations in this great House which is the apex body of the Indian people. In one word, I would say that on you rests the responsibility of not only maintaining the health of the parliamentary democracy, but also sustaining it and further strengthening it.

The Seventh Lok Sabha has got certain unique features of its own. It has taken birth in an extraordinary situation in our country. The entire nation is passing through the ordeal of an economic, political and other crisis, and this crisis is bound to create stresses and strains outside. The Parliament being the mirror of the nation, the Members are bound to respond or react to the moods outside. We hope and trust, that you, as an experienced parliamentarian, will understand that. Every Member of this House belonging to different sections of political opinion deems it as his responsibility to focus those issues within this House. Within the framework of the rules, we hope and trust that you would extend your cooperation and help and guide us in raising those issues concerning the nation so that the nation can get a purposeful and meaningful direction.

Sir, on behalf of my group, the Forward Bloc, I extend you heartiest felicitations again and assure you of all cooperation in the discharge of your duties in this House.

DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH (Srinagar): Sir, on behalf of the National Conference, I want to congratulate you. Like me, there are many Members in this House who are new to this Parliament. We have come not merely as an opposition, but I always thought that all of us are here to build India. And in building India we all have to unite whether in opposition, whether in majority or in minority and for this we must not start thinking now what has happened in the

past. We should think in terms of building this nation which, even after 33 years of independence, is still miles behind other countries. I want to assure you, Sir, that I and many young people who have come to this House are here because we have a duty to fulfil. We want to remove poverty; we want to remove misery; we want to go forward.

I feel that even though we are sitting here on the Opposition side, we are all one. We all belong to this great nation called India. I hope that this Opposition, which is divided into multiple groups, will unite under one banner as Indians and try to give a forward motion to the train which has stopped. I feel it is important that we should not oppose just for the sake of opposition; but that we should be constructive in whatever we oppose. Otherwise, we shall merely stop that train of progress for a short while.

India today is faced with great dangers, dangers within and dangers from outside. I pray to God that He should guide us all in trying to disperse those clouds which are hovering around our country.

I want to assure you, Sir, on behalf of the National Conference and of many young people who are in this House, whether sitting on this side or on the other side, that we are here to make your task easier and that we are here to build this country. I pray to God that He should grant you long life and courage to fulfil your duty to safeguard our nation.

May God bless you!

SHRI N. SOUNDARARAJAN (Sivakasi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the All India Anna DMK Parliamentary Party it is my proud privilege to offer our hearty felicitations on your elevation to this Chair.

The Chair in the Lok Sabha has glorious traditions which were enriched by your distinguished predecessors. Your unanimous election to the Chair

is a tribute to your many-splendoured personality and to the confidence of this House in you, for conducting the affairs of the House in accordance with the high traditions of this House. You are the custodian of the rights and privileges of this House; and we have every confidence that with a man of your experience in the Chair, our rights are safe in your hands.

On behalf of my party, I would like to assure you of our whole-hearted cooperation and to convey our very best wishes for success in steering this House to new heights of endeavour, in the interests of our glorious country.

SHRI FRANK ANTHONY (Nominated—Anglo-Indians): Mr. Speaker, Sir: I have great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming you to your high and indeed uniquely responsible office. I welcome you in my capacity as the senior-most Member of this House. I have had the privilege to be continuously a Member of this House for 35 years, from 1942 to 1977. If I may say so, during those 35 years, I have seen the scroll of parliamentary history and of conventions unfold before my eyes.

If I may make some respectful observations, inevitably Mr. Speaker, Speakers have differed in their approach and, if I may say so with utmost of respect, in their capacities. I do not wish to make any comparison, because comparisons are usually odious. But may I say just this—that in my

not negligible experience, I found perhaps, in Speaker Mavalankar, one of the greatest we have ever had.

It was said of him that he was ultra strict. But I thought he was firm and correctly firm; and because of that he was able to maintain the highest standards not only of decorum but of parliamentary debate. After that, in varying degrees, there has been a steady decline both in standards of decorum and in standards of debate; and to put it euphemistically sometimes the House has tended to become a bear garden. I would not use any other metaphor. Sometimes it had been a matter of sadness to some of the Senior Members that certain Members almost specialised in an attitude of defiance of the Chair. Zero Hour has become an opportunity for exercise by some Members of nothing short of rowdiness, deliberately contemptuous attitude towards the Chair. And unfortunately some of the Speakers were, if I may say so, a little weak; and yet Mr. Speaker you will have to hold the scales even. You will have to allow, if I may say so with respect, a certain amount of latitude. In the heat of debate people will lose their temper, in the heat of debate some people may use what may technically be described as unparliamentary language, but if they are deliberately flouting the authority of the Chair, deliberate disorder, deliberate contempt can only bring you and your high office and the House into contempt. Therefore, if I may very respectfully submit, the Chair will have to represent a sort of amalgam of firmness with understanding.

After your election, you become the custodian of the House. You belong to the House. As Choudhuri Sahib has said it,—I do not know whether it has become a convention; it might have become a salutary convention—you should belong to no party. Unfortunately because of the largely *khichri* syndrome that projects itself in Indian politics, salutary conventions have not been evolved. For instance, we tried, over the years, to evolve the convention that the Speaker would not be opposed in the General Elections but the parties would not agree. So far as resigning from a party is concerned, even there, I think it has become a convention that the Speaker is not a member of the parliamentary party of the ruling group, but I think some Speakers continued to be members of the Ruling Party; and because of the opposition being in effect minuscule, if I may say so with respect, Mr. Speaker, perhaps you will have to give disproportionate opportunities for debate and discussions to the opposition—disproportionate as against their number. There may be a tendency, I say this with respect, because of its overwhelming strength in the Ruling Party, to be intolerant. They will have to exercise a certain amount of restraint. But it will have to be a two-way traffic. The opposition also will have to exercise restraint because amount of frustration. That frustration may express itself in a certain amount of irresponsibility.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): After getting 57 per cent votes?

(Interruptions)

SHRI FRANK ANTHONY: There should not be 67 per cent irresponsibility.

(Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER: You may be 100 per cent irresponsible.

(Interruptions)

12 hrs.

SHRI FRANK ANTHONY: Mr. Speaker, I hope that all sections of the House will be alert to enforce decorum in the House. May I say this, with some respect, in certain of the smaller matters there are many new Members, but in smaller matters too we may start in the right direction. Members should learn from the beginning that they should not jump up and speak when you, Mr. Speaker or indeed the Chairman is on his feet. They should not give this House a kind of mela-atmosphere; they should not start walking about and they should not start walking between you and the member speaker. There has also been—you will have the opportunity of seeing the House function—a great deal of waste of time. Some Members specialise in making 15-20 minute speeches on points of order in which there is no substance. Before formulating their points of order... (Interruptions) I can see some of my friends are beyond learning. Anyhow, I hope Mr. Speaker, that they will learn.

May I welcome you to your onerous and very challenging tasks?

MR. SPEAKER: I am grateful to the hon. Members for reposing their unanimous confidence in me by electing me to the exalted office of Speaker. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Leader of the House and I am also thankful to the Leaders of different groups in the Lok Sabha for their kind and generous words about a simple farmer like me.

I am fully conscious of the high traditions of this Chair and of the stature of my illustrious predecessors of the eminence of Shri Vithalbhai Patel, Shri G. V. Mavalankar, Shri N. Sanjiva Reddy, Dr. Gurdial Singh Dhillon and others. In a few days we shall be celebrating our Republic Day which will mark the completion of thirty years of our Constitution. It is a great Constitution which has given us our Parliament and guide-lines for the conduct of its business. Over the last three decades, it has stood the test of time and we are proud of it. Conscious as I am of this big job that has been entrusted to me today, I can only give one assurance to all the hon. Members that I shall do everything in my power to uphold the Constitution and be guided by its letter and spirit for conducting the business of the House. In this gigantic task I have no doubt that I shall have your whole-hearted goodwill, co-operation and guidance. Since the Speaker has to speak for the House, as Speaker now I have to speak only one language and that is the language of the House.

Every Speaker knows that his conduct and behaviour is under close

scrutiny and subject to constant criticism. His hope is that the criticism will come in equal measure from both sides of the House. If he is too assertive, he is likely to be called arrogant. If he fails to maintain the dignity and decorum of the House he is called weak. But I would neither like to be called arrogant nor weak. I know very well that in the exercise of his powers, the Speaker must not only be impartial but must be seen by the whole House and the country to be so. When I was elected to Parliament I was chosen as a Member of a political party with which I have had long association. As Speaker, however, I will be a friend of all of you, whichever side you sit.

Hon. friends, I am quite aware of my primary and most important duty as Speaker, to protect the rights and privileges of the hon. Members. I can only assure you that I shall strive to the best of my capacity to come up to your expectations. It will be my proud privilege to uphold the dignity of the House and further enhance the prestige of the office which has been bestowed upon me. The Speaker is, after all, one of you—a Member of the House. He cannot claim to be a repository of all wisdom and all constitutional niceties. I shall exercise the powers of this office more as a duty rather than as authority to maintain its decorum.

Free debate, objective deliberations, healthy criticism is the life and strength of parliamentary democracy. As a part of my responsibility, I would do my best to promote this objective. I can assure you that it will never be my endeavour to discourage free and frank but relevant discussion in the House. I shall listen to the hon. Members on all sides, with an open mind.

The hon. Members may have different opinions and divergent views on various matters. But, one thing is common for everyone of us, that is, the progress and prosperity of the nation and good of the common man. I only hope and pray that with good-will and proper understanding, we shall live up to the expectations of the people.

Everyone of you is aware that we, being the largest democracy, the whole world is watching us with keen interest. The recent elections have once again proved to all mankind the inherent strength and vitality of our people's unflinching faith in parliamentary democracy, which is so vibrant and throbbing with life. Fortunately, Indian democracy has proved to be one of the healthiest democracies in the world. The voter has, once again, given

a clear decision and mandate to run the country according to law. It is not for me to sermonize you, who are able, seasoned and mature parliamentarians. I am sure we shall prove ourselves worthy of the faith, the electorate has reposed in us. Let us prove that this Parliament is capable of leading the great people of India to prosperity within the frame-work of freedom and democracy.

Friends, I view the Lok Sabha as the personification of the unity of the country. The varied and diverse facets of our vast country are reflected here in their fullness. At the same time, the unity of the country is reflected in your thoughts, deliberations and resolutions. Right from ancient times, we had a concept of democratic Government, which implied the consent of all for a common action:

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं
सं वो मनांसि जानताम्

I quote from Rigveda and pray for purposive deliberations in this august House:

समानं मंत्रः समितिः समानी
समानं मनः सहीचित्तमेषाम्

That is,

Let our thoughts be good alike;

Let our meeting bring prosperity
of all people alike;

Let us think in unison for the good
of all.

Thank you.

The House stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow, the 23rd January, 1980, half an hour after the President's Address.

12.10 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till half-an-hour after the Address by the President on Wednesday, January 23, 1980/Magha 3, 1901 (Saka).