

**The Congress Path  
TO  
National Disaster**

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**Smt. Gayatri Devi, M.P.**



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## **N. G. Ranga**

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Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am sorry to say that it is not possible for me or for my Party to associate ourselves with our two friends who had come out here with their recommendation that we should accept this Address of the President and thank him for it. If it is examined very carefully, it gives an indication of the Government's poor achievements and their inexcusable failures. There are plenty of unfulfilled hopes and a reference has been made to them. There are unrealisable anticipations topped by bold boasting and, what is even worse, there is unconscionable indifference to people's sufferings caused by the Government during the last year.

We find that in paragraphs 2, 3 and 7 of the Address, an effort is sought to be made to create an impression that the Government has many achievements to its credit. Possibly, these were drafted having more in their mind the foreigners whose goodwill we have to win in order to continue to obtain the loans and gifts that the Government has been getting in such abundance at the cost of India's economic security. It may possibly deceive for sometime some foreigners but it certainly cannot deceive our people here because our people are conscious of the sufferings that have come to be inflicted upon themselves. I said, there is this unconscionable indifference to people's sufferings caused by Government. I said so for this reason. Paragraph 2 refers to the disaster that had overtaken our country on two accounts, firstly, on the passing away of the former Prime Minister and, secondly, on the cyclonic disaster that had visited our people in the South. But there is a third disaster which was caused by the Government itself and that was the food famine that came upon

this country. For several months during the last year our people in different parts of the country suffered untold miseries and the Minister in-charge of it had himself to confess that he had failed in that regard and yet he was not good enough even to offer his resignation nor was the Government prepared to offer their own resignation for that abject failure which was caused by themselves. And the least they could have done was to express regret to the people over their failure and having caused that food famine in our country. It was unnecessary; it was unmerited and it could have been avoided. But the Government has done it because of its insistence upon following these wrong-headed policies in regard to controls, zonal restrictions, land legislation and various other things that they did during the last one year.

### **Rights Taken Away**

Sir, while bemoaning the late Prime Minister I cannot but bemoan the perverse insistence with which Government has passed the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution whereby they have taken away from crores and crores of our peasants their long-established and traditional rights — and natural rights too—for peasant proprietorship and kept all the power within their own hands to be able to take away their lands whenever and for whatever purposes they want.

And, of course, we know what nefarious purposes they have in their mind such as cooperative cultivation and collectivisation of agriculture.

*Shri Tyagi:* Can the Government be criticised for a measure which the Parliament has passed?

*Shri M. R. Masani:* Certainly for misleading the Parliament.

*Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath:* Parliament means your majority.

*Shri Ranga:* The bold boasting that I have said is for their saying that they are going to stop deficit financing. I am glad they have at last come to that conclusion. We have been suggesting for the past so many years that this should be done. But are they capable of implementing it? If they are to continue to remain loyal to this Third Five Year Plan as well as the Fourth Five Year Plan, it is impossible for them because they have planned to spend such huge, enormous, amounts of money in this country that it would be impossible for them to raise all that money either through taxation or by way of foreign assistance. Even as it is, they have already collected no less than Rs. 4,466 crores by way of foreign assistance. And they are now trying to go on their bended knees before them by offering this 10 per cent additional duty on imports and by raising the bank rate and by saying so many other things about what they are going to do in order to stifle our own economy, in order to please those people, and in order to recommend themselves to them for further loans and further assistance from those countries. Therefore, I do not think that it would be possible for them to be able to raise even half of what they hope to raise for the Fourth Plan by way of foreign assistance.

### **More Taxation**

In that case, what are they going to do in our own country? They can only raise these funds by higher and higher taxes. We have already had a foretaste of it from the railway budget that was introduced only yesterday. Similar things are going to happen in other States also. Of course, it may not happen in all States, because some States have already raised their land revenue assessment by 300 and even 400 per cent. But in all the States, anyhow, the tax burdens are going to be raised. If we examine how these tax

burdens have been weighing upon our people, we shall find that while in 1955-56, that is, just a decade back, the total collections at the State and the Union levels came to Rs. 767 crores; in 1964-65, the figure had risen to Rs. 2399 crores, which is easily three times the earlier figure. That being the position, would it be possible at all for this Government to impose any more tax burdens upon our people without crushing them and without destroying their productive capacity and without causing a disincentive in all spheres, in all industries as well as in agriculture? I say that it would not be possible. So they cannot raise these funds at home, and they cannot raise them abroad also. At the same time, they want to stop the safety valve which they have exploited up till now through deficit finance. How on earth then are they going to implement their Plan? It can only burst. Just as a pot would burst, if there is more and more fire under it, and the lid is put on top of it, likewise, it will break up. Just as that pot necessarily has got to break up, likewise, either their Plan would break up—of course, this Government would not break up, and they would certainly not vacate their seats voluntarily—or the people's backs would be broken up.

### **Still Dreaming**

*Shri A. P. Sharma (Buxar)*: What is my hon. friend's suggestion? No Plan?

*Shri Ranga*: That is exactly the prospect that is being offered by Government. Some of my friends are still dreaming of their plans. Is there a plan now? If there is a Plan, why is it that the President himself has been obliged to say these words here in an apologetic manner? He has said:

“Public sector projects will be implemented with greater speed....”

That means that they are going as slow as a tortoise. Then, he says:

“...and they will be designed to give quick returns....” They are giving no returns now on most fronts.

Then, he says:

“Quick returns to the community...”.

So far, they have only given returns to the officers employed there, and to the various other people who have been serving them as contractors and so on, and also to the ruling party and their agents in various ways.

“...quick returns to the community in the shape of production and profits.”

The public sector projects have shown very little production so far. As regards profits, everyone knows how notoriously low the profits have been, and as you know very well, many of these public undertakings are being run at a loss. I happen to be a member of the Committee on Public Undertakings. I do not want to divulge to this House all that is being placed before us. I can only say that the whole position is so unsatisfactory, and public funds are not being put to effective, proper and profitable use.

### **No Incentives**

In these circumstances, how is it possible for Government to give any kind of incentive at all for production? Without production, would it be possible to increase the tempo of industrial development? I am glad my hon. friend in charge of Industry is present here. He will realise, I am sure, that we cannot raise the tempo of industrial development without more and more production. Where is that production now? Of course, my hon. friends opposite say that on the cloth front, there has been greater production. But what about the handlooms? What is

their position? For so many years we have been asking for the setting up of a statutory board. For fifteen years, successive Finance Ministers have been coming and telling us that it is impossible. But, now, they are coming forward with that proposal. Therefore, they are going to make a beginning. I would like to know how many years it would take for them to rehabilitate the handloom-weaving industry. In the meanwhile, they have already decided to give a filip to the powerloom industry which will only cause destruction and depression so far as the handloom industry is concerned.

Where is greater production now? What sort of incentives are Government going to give by imposing the 10 per cent additional duty on imports? And what are those imports? Most of those imports are for developmental purposes as the speech by the Commerce Minister Shri Manubhai Shah himself will show. In regard to capital goods the figure was Rs. 207 crores in 1964; in regard to industrial raw materials, the figure was Rs. 778 crores, and in regard to consumer goods, it was Rs. 213 crores. As regards food grains etc., that is, wheat and rice and others, it was Rs. 52 crores. Out of the term 'others', the bulk of the imports, the hon. Minister himself says, consisted of kerosene. Therefore, almost all non-essential imports have been eschewed. The other imports have already been screened and then the allotments have been made by Government.

In the light of those allotments, many of the industries as well as governmental concerns have made their own plans for the development of their various industrial enterprises. What are they going to do now? They have to push up or readjust their own cost structure and their own estimated expenditure. Are you going to expect them to import less? You cannot, because if you do, then the production and developmental plans will also go awry. The increase in the

import duty would mean that they have got to pay more. And who is going to pay more for all this? Either the consumers or the entrepreneurs have to pay for it. And who are the entrepreneurs? More than one-third of these imports is on Government account. Therefore, Government have got to pay for it. So, there will be more expenditure, and therefore, more taxes, and so we come back again to the starting point. It is a vicious circle. So far as the private entrepreneurs are concerned, you are going to make their production costs go up, and when they go up, the prices naturally also have got to go up. Therefore, I come back once again to this boast of Government that they are going to keep down the prices. Will it be possible for Government?

*Shri M. R. Masani:* No.

*Shri Ranga:* A year ago, I hurled this challenge at this Government: 'Would it be possible for this Government to bring down the price level?', and I said 'No' then, and I say 'No' again. There is no prospect of it even today, and there is no offer at all of any kind of a scheme by which it would be possible for them to bring down the price level.

### **Alarming Position**

On the other hand, what has the hon. Finance Minister told us? On the very day on which the President delivered his Address to us, the Finance Minister made a statement before us saying that our foreign exchange position had become alarming. But did he not know it before? Did he not know it at least last year? Government knew it, and yet, what were they doing about it? They were living in hopes. And what sort of hopes? Hopes that were created by astrologers or hopes that were created by their own fertile imagination? Whom do they want to deceive? Surely, they can deceive everybody else, but they

cannot deceive this import and export jugglery. Imports and exports have gone up. It is true that exports have gone up, but imports also have gone up to a great extent. Both of them have gone up in such a way that it was not possible for this Government to achieve any extraordinary results. Our imports have gone up from Rs. 1178 crores in 1963 to Rs. 1215 in 1964 while the total exports have gone up from Rs. 783 crores to Rs. 835 crores during the same period. Therefore, we find that imports are going up at a higher rate than our exports. That is natural because we have so little to export, and we have so much more to import, and we need those imports also.

*Shri Sham Lal Saraf* (Jammu and Kashmir): Capital goods.

*Shri Ranga*: We need all these imports, because we want these capital goods; without these capital goods, we cannot further the industrial development of our country. When this is going on, naturally, we have got to go on begging those foreign creditors not to insist upon the repayment of loans that have already been taken but to agree to a postponement, and at the same time, on top of it, to continue to lend us more and more. That is what is happening. At the same time, we find that the prices are being given an upward spurt here on these various commodities.

Then, Government want to create troubles for the banks. They do not want the banks to be very easy in lending money for industrial development, that is, to all those people who are interested in it. So, we find that the interest rate has been pushed up to 6 per cent; that is the official rate; Government have themselves admitted it here; that the banks can charge up to 10 per cent. Then, there are other customers also; after having paid 10 per cent, they are expected to make a profit. Naturally, private enterprise is not so very keen on investing more and more

money on development. In view of all these difficulties, how is it possible to achieve greater industrial development? You make money more dear. At one end, you yourselves come into the market and begin to collect money from the people by way of government loans, compulsory deposits, compulsory annuity deposits. Then when my hon. friend, Shri Masani, had suggested that there should be a number of unit trusts, one competing with another, Government was not prepared to agree. It went in favour of one monopoly, and it has met with the same fate that a monopoly like that ought to receive. When Government comes in as a competitor to private enterprise, how is it possible for the latter to raise credit? With all those difficulties, they were trying to function. Now, having raised the bank rate also and allowed the banks and the Reserve Bank as well as State Governments to charge as much as 10 per cent, under these circumstances, there cannot be much of development.

In this development also, they have given special priority to all those industries on the government side, as well as to those industries on the private entrepreneur side which would not be yielding any results at all for many years to come. Therefore, there are not sufficient supply of consumer goods, intermediary consumer goods, tertiary goods. In the absence of all this, demand is bound to be insistent, blackmarketing is inevitable, rise in prices is inescapable and rise in costs of production of various commodities also becomes inevitable. This is how the vicious circle is going on.

### **Vicious Circle**

How is the Government going to break this vicious circle? It says it is going to do it through the Fourth Five Year Plan, for which they envisage Rs. 21,000

crores. I want the House to pay some attention for a minute to what is known in economics as the law of diminishing returns. Money is in my hands. Supposing I have a lakh of rupees. For every hundred rupees, I have got some value. But if I have a crore in my hands, not even a lakh of rupees will mean much to me. And when you place these tens of hundreds and thousands of crores in the hands of these gentlemen here, who never had known anything about a lakh of rupees when they were with Mahatma Gandhi, what happens?

*Mr Chairman:* Why not join them?

*Shri Ranga:* In order to continue the old loot again?  
No Sir.

The point is that they will come to lose proper value for money, so much so that there will be a tendency for them to go on wasting it, to be indifferent when waste takes place at various levels in the administration as well as in industrial development. Therefore, it is a dangerous thing to begin to think in terms of these huge, astronomical figures as the costs of these plans. One of the reasons why my leader, Rajaji, has been suggesting that it is better that we go back to our own earlier habits and old practices...

*Shri A. P. Sharma:* 100 years back.

*Shri Sham Lal Saraf:* To the village economy.

*Shri Ranga:* . . . . and the planning of financial provision from year to year, so that instead of thinking in terms of 20,000 crores we have to be concerned about 4,000 crores, and therefore, we will come to attach more value to every rupee, every lakh, every crore. Thereby you can expect to work for and achieve better results in terms of the expenditure you incur.

### **Impossible To Go On**

So I say it is impossible for this Government to

go on with this Fourth Five Year Plan. Let them make up their minds. Indeed, they seem to be doing so, but in a halting manner. Their Finance Minister cannot be accused of being an ignorant man. He may be knowing less than my hon. friend, Shri Dandekar, in regard to certain aspects of public finance, but certainly he knows something better than the previous Finance Minister. He has been saying from time to time different things by way of caution to this Government, but he never had the moral courage, spiritual courage to put all these things together and give them definite, well-considered advice that in this Fourth Five Year Plan, it is impossible to go on with this astronomical figure, that the objectives they have placed before themselves in the Plan cannot be realised, and what is more, that the Third Plan itself is now on the rocks. Therefore, even the targets they have placed before themselves for the next 1½ years are not in sight; they have already been too slow in regard to many of these targets, which have got to be phased over the next three or four years, so that it would be easier for the people to try and co-operate with this Government in spite of its extravagance and financial ambitions.

Are they going to raise production in our country? Are they really so minded? They say so. But what are they doing on the food front? By bringing in this PL 480 assistance at one time, we thought my hon. friend, Shri S. K. Patil, was rendering a service to our country, because just at that moment, for one or two years we thought we needed that assistance and we could afford to go in for it. But what is the long-term effect of it? To act as a kind of disincentive in this country on the food front. And worse, to bring into the mind of the people, limited as it is, a sense of self-complacency, with the result that they have not been giving proper incentives to our growers.

The President talks here of their trying to maintain

a minimum level of prices. Based on what? On some kind of arbitrary notion of their own. They are going to constitute an Agricultural Prices Commission. My hon. friend, Shri Patil, talked about it six years ago, within two months of his taking office as Food Minister, because in the first flush of victory, every Minister is very very hopeful. Afterwards, what happened? His schemes were broken into bits, and he could not implement them at all.

Now they say they are going to implement it. Where is the guarantee? Supposing they do implement it, in what way are they going to do it? Are they going to withdraw the 17th Amendment to the Constitution, that infamous amendment? Is it not working as a disincentive? Are they going to reconsider their land reforms legislation and reorganise and reform it, so that the peasants would be assured of the opportunities they would need, to develop for themselves? No, Sir. Now they have even come up with a new rule that government lands ought not to be distributed among agricultural workers on *patta*, even temporary *patta*. Therefore, where are the incentives?

Then there is also the other disincentive they have created by bringing in zonal restrictions. Their permits, quotas and controls in other spheres have also affected the agriculturists adversely because they have got to pay more for their consumer goods. When we objected to the kerosene tax, that infamous tax, the previous Finance Minister said, 'No, no, it is not going to affect anybody'. But the Commerce Minister himself has said that it is one of the most important imports now in our economy. Who is consuming it? It is the peasant himself.

### **Disincentives**

Therefore, the peasants are now suffering from

these disincentives caused by higher prices for commodities needed for their agricultural operations and higher prices for consumer goods they have got to purchase, and also by these restrictions which come in the way of their getting the prices ruling in the market. Why should not the peasant be allowed an economic return on his produce? In the case of those people who are poor and vulnerable, why should not Government adopt a policy of placing foodgrains at a reasonable level, at a lower level of prices, so that they would be able to get them, while at the same time not doing any harm to the producer?

In all these directions, the Government have failed. On top of it, the Finance Minister comes and says, 'No, no', his *alter ego* has spoken at Durgapur saying 'no, no; the whole of the Fourth Plan should be reorganised'. But later, he was dismissed by his agent here presiding over the Planning Commission. They say 'No, we stick to our 21,000 crores'. But these people seem very boastful; at the same time, they are not ashamed of accepting any kind of plain-speaking of this character even from their own President!

In spite of all his failures, one after the other — which he himself brings to the notice of this House through some kind of paper — the Finance Minister continues to stick to his job. And the Prime Minister, of course, is being forced to remain in his job.

All my friends go on merrily with their round-the-clock timetables of maintaining their offices.

Then, the President says that there should be better administration, honest administration. He says:

“...results can be obtained in a satisfactory manner only if the administrative machinery for the implementation of plans and policies functions with efficiency, speed and integrity.”

Very well. What about these Ministers? Should they not also behave in the same way . . .

*Shri Shinkre* (Marmagoa): They are above suspicion.

*Shri Ranga*: . . . with efficiency, with speed, with integrity? They are, evidently above all these considerations. So, I cannot congratulate the hon. friends of this Ministry here or the State Ministries.

Then I come to the international problem, to defence itself. Is the Government itself able to look after defence effectively? I said some time ago that they have themselves not kept up or fulfilled their own promises. They said they were going to organise six ordnance factories. They said later only four. Out of them only one has gone into production, another was going into production, the other two are to go into production two years hence. In the meantime suppose China invades us? So, we have to pray to God to see that these godless Chinese do not invade our country and impose their will upon us, which is the best way to defend our country.

Would it be possible for us alone to defend our country? Would we not need assistance from other countries. Indeed, the late Prime Minister made that confession when he sent round an SOS to all the countries all over the world to rescue us when the Chinese invaded us. Do we not need that aid today? If we need it, how are we going to get it? Not through conventional weapons alone, because China has already exploded an atom bomb. She is going to explode another. I am glad that for once the President has been advised in anticipation that China is going to explode a second bomb. When the second explosion also takes place, our position becomes much more vulnerable. So, should we not seek friendly assistance? And it has been proffered more than a

year ago, by President Johnson. Why did we not immediately hail it? Why were we so churlish?

### **Soviet Veto**

Then the Prime Minister said we would like to have it from every body, we would like to have a guarantee. Long before any guarantee comes at all -- and if it comes, you will be giving a veto to Soviet Russia -- should we not hail this offer made by the President of the United States and accept their offer in order to be able to withstand any kind of threat, any invasion that may come in future, and to guarantee ourselves against this threat of Chinese invasion?

Unfortunately, this Government is very nervous when it comes to international affairs, for two reasons. Firstly, lest it should be accused of betraying the late Prime Minister, and secondly lest it should anger Soviet Russia. I do not think Soviet Russia is going to be angered in any way at all if we were to say to America: "Yes, we welcome the offer you have made, -- it is no good talking of an umbrella or any of these things -- the offer you have given not only to us but to anybody who may ask for it; we ask for it, we are not ashamed of it."

Why should we be ashamed? Were we ashamed when we were taking from America nearly 50 per cent of the total foreign assistance that we have been getting from abroad? Is it not a fact that out of Rs. 4,466 crores of foreign assistance that we were getting, 50 per cent was coming from America alone -- Rs. 1,161 crores by way of P.L. 480, and Rs. 1,193 crores otherwise? When we have no sense of shame and we do not mind receiving all this assistance, it is much more necessary, much more relevant to the facts of life in our country, that we should seek this assistance from America. If we do so, we need not be

afraid of the atomic power of China. If we do not, and if we hang on to the dead ghost of these dogmas, we will be ruining our people. Hence I put it, that without indulging in inflation, without having to borrow so much more from abroad, without raising the tax burdens of our people, it would still be possible for us to develop our industrial production, industrial equipment, provided we bring down the cost of defence by at least 50 per cent. These Rs. 500 crores we will be able to save every year, and we can do so provided, of course, we accept a reasonable, sensible, farsighted foreign policy.

My hon. friend the Foreign Minister made a statement this morning — he has only repeated what the Prime Minister has been saying—about their asking America, Russia and other countries to go into another Geneva type of conference in order to ensure peace in South Vietnam and Laos. Who was disturbing that peace? Not the South Vietnamese, not the Laotians, not even the Americans. It was the Communist Chinese—in the same way in which they have tried to invade our country and capture power in our country with the help of their friends in our country. They have been trying to expand the Communist empire over the whole of South-east Asia.

Let us not forget the fact that, just as in the olden days it used to be said that India's strategic frontiers in the West stretched up to Aden, so also our strategic frontiers stretch up to Hong Kong in the East, and if we have got to safeguard our future and our defences, we can do so only by going to the rescue of those countries. What did we do? The late Prime Minister himself committed a blunder, and I am sorry the present Prime Minister continues it, in not raising India's voice in favour of Malaysia, in not going to the rescue of our good, sincere, steady friend, Tunku Abdul Rahman. That man had the courage, just when China was invading us, even while he was tour-

ing Pakistan which was known to be a friend of China, to raise his voice in no uncertain terms and say that the hearts of all the Malaysians were behind India. And yet, here is our Government which has not got that moral courage to be able to stand by its friends. Just as it had betrayed other friends also—Chiang kai-Shek and others—so also, it is in danger of betraying these people also.

### **No Respect for India**

Let us not talk about a Geneva type of conference. Let us first of all say that, to the extent we can possibly offer even in a token manner, our army, certain regiments of our army, certain armaments, would be placed at the disposal of Malaysia in her fight, almost unequal fight, against Indonesia, and therefore let us begin to talk of peaceful talks, and negotiations. If we do it that way, then what is likely to happen is that the rest of the world will come to have some respect for us. Today nobody has any respect for us; from Ceylon, from Burma from this end, turn anywhere you like, even Africa or anywhere else, nobody cares for India, nobody has got any respect at all for these boastful suggestions that we are making.

We are today not a victor country. I never wish to be a victor. We are not even a really independent country because India is still subject to the terrible pressure, which the President himself has stated is still there hanging like a Damocles' sword over our heads. It is only by reorienting our policies on the home front, on the economic front, on the international trade front and in national affairs that we can achieve this — only by ourselves coming out boldly and saying, "Yes, we have planned badly, wrongly, we are going to be realistic, and so we would re-organise, reorient our plans and would go back to a

system of public finance which can be controlled, which can be checked from time to time, which would be within the reliable capacity of the people of our country in every sphere of life, spiritual, social, political and so on," can we win the confidence of our people and others.

### **Confidence Lost**

In conclusion I wish to say that this Government has lost the confidence of the people. Our friends have been talking about language. I do not wish to go into that, because the House has had a discussion yesterday, and it would have so much more also from various other people. All that I need say is this. When my friends, the Communist Party people, began to talk about *bandh*, did it prove a success? No. Why not? Because the public was not behind it. It is no good thinking that only the Tamils are exercised over this question. I have just now come from Kerala. Yesterday over the whole of Kerala there was a strike. Earlier there were strikes in various places. Andhra too is on fire. So is Mysore. Who is helping these people? Not political parties. My leader has been wise enough to ask our party not to go into this thing at all. I want my friends also to give the same freedom to their members as my leader has given us. They are not prepared to do that. (*Interruptions*) We were always in favour of keeping it out of the political struggle. Leave it to the great man, Shri Rajaji and these people here. Let them settle it in a statesmanlike way... (*Interruptions.*) Your own Prime Minister is going to call a conference of the leaders. It may not be one conference. You may have to call many conferences before you can settle this explosive question. The most important thing is: why is it that all these terrible happenings were there. So many of our own beloved citizens, and more beloved

youngmen have come to be killed. Why did they rush into this? It is because of the pressure of public opinion. Why has the public given such a response? It is because of this parlous economic position: it is also because of the various other things that have been happening in their midst as a result of which they have suffered. They are suffering so badly and they do not know what to do, at the time of the elections, there are experienced people here, for the Congress lions of these elections who can get hold of the voters. These people go there. It is not only these people. From the panchayat samitis upwards, every possible governmental machinery is being pressed into service in order to 'samjao' the poor voter in a manner which they would not generally like in calmer moments. Thus they win by-elections; but you cannot win the hearts of the people and unless you win the hearts of the people, it would not be possible for you to implement the Plan, even an annual plan, any kind of developmental plan, anywhere. I warn this Government that it has lost their confidence. Unless it mends its ways, and reorients its own policies in national and international affairs, there is an abysmal gap of misfortune and disaster awaiting not only this Ministry — I would not mind that — but also the people themselves. I can only pray to God that He may give some wisdom to these people at least for a little while so that they behave as sensible people.

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*Text of speech delivered in the Lok Sabha on February 19, 1965 in the course of the debate on the President's Address.*

# **Shrimati Gayatri Devi**

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Mr. Deputy-Speaker, before I begin my speech on the President's Address, I should like to apologize to you for disobeying your orders when you asked me to sit down earlier on, when Mr. Mathur made certain charges about my having campaigned in the panchayat elections. As he is not here at the moment I would not like to say anything except that I repudiate the charge that I campaigned during the panchayat elections.

There was one remark of Mr. Mathur later. He said that he respected the princes. That is because he knows they are the backbone of the Congress Party, not only in Rajasthan but in other States too.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I would like to thank the President for his Address. At the same time I feel that his Address was a reflection of the unsatisfactory state of the Government today. It lays emphasis on our few achievements and glosses over our dismal failures. The President says that, looking back on the last twelve months, we have made considerable progress. I should like to point out that during the fifteen years, during the last three five-year plans, no progress has been made whatsoever so far as uplifting the living conditions of the poor of our country is concerned. Still, today, the Government have not been able to provide cheap food, housing or clothing. We have not achieved anything in this line during fifteen years of planning. I think it is an absolute disgrace that the Government, whose primary duty it is to feed the people, to house the people and to clothe the people have failed in this. And instead of being inspired by hope and confidence, the people are today so disappointed and so apathetic that they are very pessimistic about the future.

The country today needs a clean and efficient administration. People need to feel secure and confident in the leadership, and this can only be achieved if all the Ministries co-ordinate their efforts to tackle the problems that are facing us today. The Ministries must concentrate on the vital issues that are facing the country, primarily the defence of our country, the stability of our economy, and the provision of cheap food, housing, free education, health facilities and other essential commodities to the people. To hide their failures in these respects the ruling party has a genius for diverting public attention. Last year the people were agitated over the rising cost of living. This year the country is tearing itself over the language issue and the people are forgetting the conditions under which they are living. I would appeal to the Press not to give so much space, to all these issues nor to the sanctimonious utterances made by Congress Ministers, but to devote more space to hammering at the Government for their complete failure in the economic policy of this country, for their complete failure in the defence of this country, and for their complete failure in not being able to raise the standard of living of our people. This is what the Press should keep on hammering at. And this is what the people should be made aware of instead of having their attention diverted to other matters. I would appeal to the Press to do this.

The country today, when it should be strong and united, is divided over an artificially created issue. It is not Rajaji's fault that this crisis should have arisen: it is the fault of the ruling party. It was their duty to have taken the consensus of opinion in this country before introducing Hindi as the official language of India on the 26th of January. I admit that if we had a common language it might bind the people together. Here we must take lessons from other countries. After all, there are other nations in

the world who have more than one or two official languages, for instance, Canada and Switzerland. Could we not take some lessons from them? I admit they had their troubles too; and our problems are probably more complex, because we have a variety of languages in this sub-continent of ours.

*Shrimati Lakshmi Kanthamma:* They are not foreign languages.

*Shrimati Gayatri Devi:* They are not foreign languages to us either.

*An Hon. Member:* What about English?

*Shrimati Gayatri Devi:* English may be a foreign language. But so could the French feel that English is a foreign language. (*Interruptions*).

*Mr. Deputy-Speaker:* Please address the Chair.

*An Hon. Member:* What is Swatantra Party's policy in this?

*Shrimati Gayatri Devi:* We do not have any policy about this; we are more concerned with the vital issues.

### **Echoes of Ruling Party**

One wonders whether the conference of Chief Ministers will be able to come to any satisfactory solution. After all, they are the representatives of the same party which forced this issue on the country and who assured the Cabinet that it will be safe to introduce Hindi on January 26. From the events that have evolved since then it is obvious that their decision has proved faulty. And it will be interesting to see whether the Chief Ministers will act as the true representatives of their States and the people or just as the mere echoes of the ruling party. It is natural that the ruling party itself should be divided on this issue, and it is a great tragedy that this domestic crisis should have been brought about at such a time and and that the party in power, taking the consensus of

opinion in the different parts of the country, was not able to avoid it. I myself feel that no effort should be spared to come to some understanding on this vital problem. Otherwise it might be the beginning of the disintegration of India.

My suggestion would, therefore, be that the pro-Hindi political parties in this country should send their leaders to the States where there have been violent anti-Hindi demonstrations. The people of the non-Hindi speaking parts of the country, quite naturally, feel that they will be at a disadvantage if they have to speak and conduct national business in a language in which they are not at home. I do not approve of the methods used by those who feel aggrieved.

*Shri Sonavane:* As if all the masses speak English!

*Shri Ranga:* Are all the masses in the south going to learn your Hindi?

*Shri Sonavane:* Yes.

*Shri Ranga:* Do be sensible.

## **Unity Vital**

*Shrimati Gayatri Devi:* I do not approve of the methods used by those who feel aggrieved, but at the same time I feel that there is no point in aggravating the situation by having counter-demonstrations, demanding complete abolition of English and imposition of Hindi on non-Hindi speaking people. We must be practical, and we must remember that whatever language we may speak, whatever religion we may practise, we are all first and foremost Indians, and in our unity depends the survival of our independence. We have an outside enemy to fight, and if we squabble over internal issues we shall not only be the laughing stock of the world, but we may be forced to learn yet another language—and I may assure you it will be a very difficult one.

So once more I should like to suggest that a meeting should be called of all the leaders of the different groups who are agitating over the language. This cannot be settled by our Ministers because they are not true representatives of the people of India. Had they been, this issue would never have arisen. (An Hon. Member: What is the Resolution of the Swatantra Party?) We have none; I have said it before; it is quite natural that everybody should have difference of opinion on this issue.

Once again, I should like to emphasise that we must concentrate on solving our essential difficulties. For instance, the shortage of foodgrains in this country has caused a lot of hardship to the people. It is pathetic to watch the public, especially women and children, queue up in front of fair price shops and wait for hours and hours only to find at the end that the windows are closed on their face because the Government shops have run out of stock. Not only that; it seems a pity that while blaming the traders for profiteering the Government too has been guilty of the same... (*Interruptions.*)

*Shri Ranga:* Aren't you ashamed of that?

### **Taxes Wasted**

*Shrimati Gayatri Devi:* Surely it is the essential duty of the Government to provide food to the people. Of what avail is the back-breaking tax paid to the Government to run this country, if they cannot even do that? After three successive Plans and spending vast sums of money, it is absolutely disgraceful that we have had to face scarcity this year. Our planners and the Cabinet have spent vast sums of public funds on heavy industry without paying sufficient attention to agricultural production; it is a reflection on their competence and knowledge, and surprisingly enough it is those who are responsible for this who

are still at the helm of affairs. In no other democratic country people would have tolerated such a thing . . .  
(*Interruptions.*)

*Shri Ranga:* What is it they are laughing about? Are they not ashamed of this?

*Shri Hukam Chand Kachvay:* Ham Shri Ranga ki bath par hans rahen hain.

*Shri Ranga:* I am not speaking in Hindi; it is true.

*Shrimati Gayatri Devi:* How can we believe the Government will keep a close watch on the situation and review the food distribution policy? What have they been doing the last 15 years? The time has now come to be practical and explore every possible way of relieving the food situation. The land reform measures proposed by the present ruling party in their drive towards socialism must be reviewed. If larger holdings prove to be more productive, then the ceiling must go. The scheme to give land to the landless can still be implemented if fallow land can be made productive. As regards import of wheat into this country, our commercial attaches abroad must be asked to explore every available source and our docks must be modernised to handle swiftly and efficiently the incoming goods. For instance, there was a tremendous surplus of wheat in Argentina and our representatives could have come to some agreement with the Government of that country to supply the wheat that they did not need at a lesser price, so that with the freight charges paid, it could have landed in India at the same cost as from America. Modern silos should be built at various rail heads, so as to ensure distribution in times of shortage. A lot of food grain is lost due to bad and insufficiently planned granaries. Apart from all this, it must be considered whether or not the controls imposed by the Government have not had a lot to do with the scarcity of food. The Hon. Union Minister for Communications and Parliamentary Affairs said on the 11th of February that

he thought there was no scarcity and that what we were witnessing in the country today was all artificial. He based his arguments on the fact that any quantity of food can be bought in the black market and therefore it obviously meant that there was no shortage of commodities. He quite rightly observed that many traders preferred controls to competition as it will enable them to profit in black-marketing. Some Government officials similarly wanted controls for the same reason. I should like to say that the Government should be guilty of the same charges because the Government exists on controls. I agree with Mr. P. R. Patel who spoke before me that it is this control which is responsible for hoarding. Government cannot remove that because it is on that that Government exists; if the control went they would have no hold on either the industrialists or on traders. Their hold on the people would also go; they are using it as a method to blackmail the people. I know that the Government will not remove controls, not because they think it is necessary but because it is their only hold on the people.

### **No Trust in Government**

The same idea could be applied to the unaccounted and undisclosed money that is in India today. Had there been less controls and less tax on profits and more incentive, this money would have come out and been put into use to produce more and there would have been more employment. That money is not coming out because the industrialists do not trust the fiscal policies of the Government.

The President's Address says that higher production is the best answer to the threat of inflation, but every control on the part of the Finance Ministry acts as a curb to higher production. The recent increase in bank rate and the important duty on certain

important commodities will make the cost of production in this country higher and more difficult. Why should the Government ask for higher production in one breath and put a deterrent in another, is a question one cannot answer. The top industrialists in this country had been asked to give their advice by the Planning Commission. The advice they give for decontrol and expansion of the private sector is not liked by the Congress Party because quite naturally it would make their influence on the people less. Therefore, though their advice is sought, it is never implemented. If the country is to be saved from bankruptcy some drastic steps must be taken even if it meant a change in the policy of the ruling party. Their interests of the party must take second place to the interests of the nation. It must be conceded that the Cabinet is a divided house and the ruling party is stifling the economic growth of this developing nation, starving the people of this country and leading us towards bankruptcy. There is no dearth of capable men in this country and as I have said before, their advice is often sought but never implemented. It must be humiliating for them to have to contribute large sums of money to the ruling party with whose economic policies they do not agree. I should like to appeal to the industrialists to desist from helping the ruling party to stay in power, but if they listen to my advice, they would not get the necessary import licences and facilities to run their industries and that would mean more misery, more unemployment and less production. One does not know how to solve this problem. But to save this country I feel that our industrialists must take a really firm stand with the Government.

Can we really believe that the Government means to clean up the administrative machinery? Day by day, Government machinery is being more and more identified with the ruling party. As the ruling party

is losing the confidence of the people, it is tightening its grip and misusing its power. In Rajasthan, for instance, there was a tremendous scandal over the distribution of gur which was given to the Kriya Vikraya Sangh. This Sangh made a profit of one crore and some lakhs of rupees. The secretary of the Sangh was arrested. A trader was arrested in this connection. But the President of the Sangh was rewarded with a very important portfolio in the Rajasthan Cabinet.

*Some Hon. Members:* Shame, shame.

*Shrimati Gayatri Devi:* This has been pointed out in the Rajya Sabha and several members of the Assembly came up to the Home Minister and told him about this, but no notice has been taken. Is this the way in which the Government intends to clean up the administrative machinery? Their foundation is based on corruption.

Once more, I would like to emphasise that in the present crisis, the Government should come out of its coma and all the departments should co-operate and work together to solve the problems the country is facing today.

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*Text of speech delivered in the Lok Sabha on February 24, 1965 in the course of the debate on the President's Address.*



