

Presidential Speeches
SHRI LK ADVANI

National Council

New Delhi

27 October, 2004

Brother and Sister Delegates,

We meet today in exceptional circumstances.

On 18 October, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu indicated to the senior leaders of the BJP his unwillingness to continue as Party President. His reasons were intensely personal and noble. All of us, without exception, pressed him to continue, perhaps by taking some time off to attend to his family. Shri Naidu felt this would be unfair to both the party and himself. He urged us to allow him to relinquish charge.

When persuasion failed, the office bearers met and reluctantly accepted Shri Naidu's resignation.

Venkaiah's Contribution

In the 26 months he served as Party President, Shri Naidu set exemplary standards in dedication and energy. His enthusiasm was infectious and his forthrightness endearing. He led from the front, undaunted in adversity and humble in triumph.

I salute Shri Naidu for his role in steering the party through challenging times. The party will continue to benefit from his services.

Poll Setback

Friends, these are trying times for the BJP. When we met on 6 February this year, the mood in the National Council was heady. Eight months later, the atmosphere is sombre.

In May 2004, we lost a general election we were confident of winning. It was a major setback. The steady advance of the BJP in the Lok Sabha, from 2 seats in 1984 to 181 seats in 1999, was both halted and reversed. We have come down to 138 seats.

The BJP has also lost its position as the largest party in the Lok Sabha. The difference between the BJP and Congress tally may be only 8 parliamentary seats. However, the symbolic importance of the Congress edging us to second place cannot be underplayed.

I would also like to stress the magnitude of the BJP reverses in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. Together they wiped out the very impressive showing of the party in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.

Over the past months, the party has undertaken a review of the results of the general election. The process of introspection has acquired an additional urgency in view of the narrow failure of our alliance to secure a majority in the Maharashtra Assembly election.

Let me say at the outset that we respect the verdict of the people unreservedly. The electorate may not have given a categorical endorsement to the Congress-led alliance. The UPA Government at the Centre is unquestionably a combination based on expediency and opportunism. Yet, we cannot be blind to the fact that this combination has managed to cobble a majority precisely because of our collective shortcomings.

Our Miscalculation

What are the central lessons to be drawn from our performance in the general election?

First we must recognise where we miscalculated. We assumed a direct correlation between good governance and the electoral outcome. We were not entirely correct.

The BJP and the NDA fought the election on the strength of the inspired leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and its record in government. On both these counts we had much to be proud of.

Proud Performance

In the course of six years, the Vajpayee Government transformed the face of India.

We enhanced India's competitive edge and strengthened the country's economic and technological foundations. We tried to remove the curbs on entrepreneurship and dismantle the pernicious licence-permit-quota raj that had shackled the country. We brought inflation down to a record low. India's forex reserves touched record levels.

We enhanced the nation's security by making India a nuclear power. We curbed cross-border terrorism and, at the same time, improved relations with our neighbours. We made India an important voice in the world.

We strengthened democracy in India. We gave a new and harmonious meaning to federalism and removed irritants in the path of Centre-State relations. We facilitated the most free, fair and transparent election in Jammu and Kashmir.

In years to come, I have no doubt that the government of Shri Vajpayee will be regarded as the most performing administration since Jawaharlal Nehru.

Aspects Overlooked

Unfortunately, good governance in a country as large and diverse as India does not generate a uniform effect. In focussing on the big picture we were guilty of overlooking some details.

We weren't sufficiently attentive to the human costs of rapid change. In making India globally competitive, we fell short of providing an adequate cushion to communities that were overwhelmed by both technology and the market.

In seeking to ride the crest of change we offended those who felt left out by it. They were unmoved by our assertion that India is shining.

We have paid a heavy price for our failings. We are mindful of our deficiencies. We will take the necessary corrective measures.

Second, in the course of the BJP's voyage from the fringe to the centre of the political stage, we aroused many expectations, some extremely emotive. We were unable to fulfil some of these.

The construction of a grand temple honouring Lord Ram at his birthplace in Ayodhya was one such issue.

Ayodhya Issue

For the BJP, and for me personally, the *Ram Janmabhoomi* movement was a defining landmark. I have little hesitation in saying that it was our participation in this movement of Hindu resurgence that fired the people's imagination and catapulted the party to national prominence.

A large section of those who supported us from 1989 expected a BJP-led government to remove the hurdles in the path of temple construction in Ayodhya.

The expectations of the people were unrelated to the constraints of coalition politics, the churlishness of our opponents and the complications of judicial involvement.

In the final year of the NDA Government we made quiet progress to untangle the problem through negotiations involving Hindu and Muslim religious leaders. I was optimistic that a negotiated settlement honouring national sentiment would be possible shortly after the general election.

Unfortunately, the progress was slow and we deliberately chose to keep the discussions unpublicised. Consequently, at the time of the election there was understandable disappointment at our failure to show tangible progress in facilitating the Ram temple.

It was politically awkward for the BJP that much of the impatience was articulated by organisations we regard as fraternal. The dissensions fostered an impression of ideological disunity and confused our traditional supporters.

Concerns of *Karyakartas*

Finally, we could not motivate our *karyakartas* sufficiently and uniformly.

The BJP is a party whose heart and soul is the *karyakarta*. It is the *karyakarta* who works tirelessly for the party through times good and bad. It is the *karyakarta* who connects to the ordinary voter.

Over the past few months, I have been disturbed by

innumerable complaints from grassroot *karyakartas* about the behaviour and style of some party functionaries during the time BJP was in power at the Centre. There have been charges of arrogance, aloofness, cronyism, over-dependence on money power and even corruption.

This sort of conduct bolsters public cynicism. It reinforces the prevailing view that the country is being dragged down by the self-seeking, greedy politician.

Value-based Politics

The BJP is a party with a difference. Our claim will be lacking in credibility unless we show through our behaviour and integrity that we are not a part of the disease. The BJP will exert to change this image of the Ugly Politician.

The BJP expects its leaders and *karyakartas* at all levels to conduct themselves with honour, restraint and dignity. Our politics must be value-based. We cannot let the self-aggrandising Congress culture eat into our vitality.

We must set elevated standards of personal conduct. This is crucial if we are to reclaim the moral high-ground that enabled us to emerge as the new hope for a resurgent India.

It is important to dwell on our lapses. A political party has to be responsive to the voice of the people. When the people speak, as they did in the general election, it is our sacred duty to pay heed.

Self-criticism is not an expression of defeatism. It is an avenue of renewal. Let us remember that our forward march has only been interrupted; it has not been stymied.

As Party President, my priority is to mould the BJP into a battle-worthy organisation capable of taking on the challenges of the Congress and the Left, both on the ideological and political fronts. Collectively, we will set the stage for a resounding NDA majority in the 15th Lok Sabha.

Assault on Our Ideology

For the BJP, the coming days will be challenging. The UPA Government, backed by the Communists, has launched a concerted attack on our ideology. In the guise of de-toxification, it has endorsed

a witch-hunt against those who were appointed to public posts by the NDA Government. The process has begun at the Centre and is certain to percolate to the states.

Simultaneously, national heroes like Veer Savarkar, from whom we take inspiration, have been denigrated and even vilified. History is being re-written to suit the preferences of those who can scarcely conceal their contempt for the heritage of India. Let us not forget the calumny that was heaped on national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose by the Communists in the past.

The message of the ruling coalition is clear: any association with the BJP and its ideology is not to be tolerated.

Although the behaviour of the UPA goes against all democratic norms, there is something about its intolerance that I find redeeming. Our opponents have grudgingly acknowledged what we have always maintained: the backbone of the BJP is its ideology.

Defining Our Ideology

Ideology is what gives the BJP its distinctive identity. We are a party with a difference, precisely because we are firmly wedded to a set of core beliefs. Our political priorities, strategies and tactics may be fashioned by the issues of the day but our ideology remains constant.

The BJP is first and foremost a 'nation-first' party. We are a party of nationalism. Our politics is determined by the litmus test of what is good and desirable for the nation.

The BJP is the party of cultural nationalism. We believe that Indian nationhood stems from an underlying cultural oneness. Some of us call this sense of nationhood *Hindutva*; Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay also called it *Bharatiyata*.

I am saddened that from being a description of the core of our nationhood, *Hindutva* has been misrepresented to denote a political approach. *Hindutva* is a sentiment; it is neither an electoral slogan nor should it be confused with religion. It is the description of a way of life, an idea that carries the endorsement of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court in a judgement dated 11 December, 1995, observed :

“...no precise meaning can be ascribed to the terms Hindu, Hindutva and Hinduism; and no meaning in the abstract can confine it to the narrow limits of religion alone, excluding the content of Indian culture and heritage. It is also indicated that the term Hindutva is related more to the way of life of the people in the subcontinent. It is difficult to appreciate how in the face of these (earlier Supreme Court) decisions the term Hindutva or Hinduism per se, in the abstract, can be assumed to mean and be equated with narrow fundamentalist Hindu religious bigotry.”

Finally, the BJP is committed to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay's elucidation of integral humanism. We are governed by the belief that development must blend harmoniously with tradition and the environment. We believe that the economic foundations of India should not be built on over-consumption, waste and ecological destruction. We believe in decentralisation, deregulation, harmony and social justice.

Doubts Expressed

For the past few years, I have often heard it said that the party has abandoned its ideology.

In 1974, when the Jana Sangh agreed to join the movement led by Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan, there were many internal doubts. Some of our leaders questioned the wisdom of accepting the leadership of a man whose earlier views on Jammu and Kashmir and Nagaland were sharply at variance with ours.

Likewise, in 1998, when we joined hands with other regional parties to launch the NDA, the BJP was again accused of abandoning its ideology. This time the fears arose from the fact that the repeal of Article 370, the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya and the commitment to a uniform civil code did not feature in the National Agenda for Governance.

Committed to Ideology

The fears are unfounded. Ideology is a commitment to certain principles. It is what defines our approach to political questions. The political priorities of the day are, however, determined by other considerations and need a context.

It was the Congress party's reversal of the Shah Bano judgment in 1985 that provided us the cue for our campaign to expose pseudo-

secularism. The campaign was bolstered in 1989 when we joined the *Ram Janmabhoomi* agitation initiated by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Ayodhya was the shining example of the double standards of the so-called “secular” establishment in matters relating to Hindus.

Ram Temple will be Built

A great deal has changed since the day I began the Somnath to Ayodhya rath yatra 14 years ago. On the face of it, the temple in Ayodhya remains caught in an infuriatingly complex legal tangle. Political parties pay lip service to the need for a judicial verdict because it saves them the embarrassment of exercising a choice. Our “eminent historians” prefer to look the other way when confronted with the archaeological evidence of a temple that predated the Babri Masjid.

Yet, the environment that made Ayodhya the most potent mass movement in post-Independent India has changed.

The Ayodhya movement ensured that Hindus can no longer be either taken for granted or their sentiments blatantly disregarded.

Bane of Minoritism

Minoritism and vote-bank politics is still practised by the Congress but its form has undergone a change. It is now more surreptitious and silent so as to forestall any countervailing mobilisation. Yet the country would do well to recognise the persistence of the phenomenon and be alert to it.

The intemperate reaction to the BJP’s proposal for institutionalising the two-child norm is just one example of how sectarian considerations play havoc with the nation’s progress.

Hindu Renaissance

Our commitment to the Ram temple in Ayodhya is intact and unwavering. It was reiterated in the Vision Document 2004. The nation eagerly looks forward to the day the makeshift temple at *Ram Janmabhoomi* is replaced by a structure befitting the greatness of Lord Ram.

At the same time, we must be candid enough to recognise that the Hindu anger that exploded on the streets in the early-

Nineties has given way to a patient wait for the new temple whose construction is, I feel, inevitable.

The issue extends beyond the Ram temple. A cogent and enlightened Hindu approach to the modern world demands a Hindu Renaissance much along the lines Swami Vivekananda envisaged.

Farmers, Tribals and Dalits

The past five years have witnessed important shifts in the political priorities of the people. In demographic terms, our population has become younger. As a responsive party, the BJP must take the lead in articulating their aspirations in an idiom they are familiar with.

There are social groups and communities who now aggressively seek a stake in the power structure. They must be accommodated in the decision-making structures of the party. Our political approach has to be decisively inclusive.

We are, first and foremost, a party with deep roots in the villages of India. The overwhelming majority of our MPs and MLAs represent rural constituencies. We have to articulate the concerns and champion the interests of India's kisans.

The BJP has a proud record of having the largest number of MPs from Dalit and tribal communities. Organisations linked to our *parivar* are involved in education and other welfare schemes aimed at the empowerment of tribals. Party functionaries must play a role in these important nation-building initiatives.

We must not become prisoners of our own past. We have to press ahead, mindful of our commitment to the people, the future of the country and our own ideology.

Duties as Opposition

Today, we are the leading opposition party. Along with our partners in the NDA, we form a substantial bloc in both Houses of Parliament. However, we are a different opposition party from the one we were prior to 1998. We are today an opposition party with a rich experience in governance. We are perceived as the shadow government.

We must fulfil our opposition responsibilities with vigour

and energy but we must also conduct ourselves with dignity and responsibility. The positions we take must be well-considered and thorough.

In addition, the BJP state governments must be mindful of the quality of governance they provide.

Fragile Arrangement

The UPA Government may have a commanding majority in Parliament but it is not a stable government as Shri Vajpayee's government was in the preceding five years. Stability does not merely come from numbers. It also stems from the quality of governance.

The Manmohan Singh Government is yet to come to terms with its own contradictions. The Left parties have a retrograde agenda; the regional parties have their own priorities; and the Congress is caught between two power centres.

This is not a stable government. This is a fragile arrangement which may either limp through its tenure or collapse abruptly. Either way, the consequences for India are not encouraging.

In such a situation, the BJP must be ready for all eventualities. We must keep the unity of the NDA firmly intact and coordinate our responses. We must seize all opportunities to put a desperate government on the mat but we must do so with the awareness that the people are also scrutinising our responses and our conduct.

Terrorism and Security

Heading the list of national problems, we must focus on is terrorism and security.

The civil unrest in Manipur, the threats posed by insurgent groups in the North-east and the demographic transformation of the whole of eastern India through illegal migration from Bangladesh are matters of deep concern to us.

The shameful appeasement of left-wing extremists by the Congress Government in Andhra Pradesh has compromised law and order in neighbouring states and given a fillip to insurgency in Nepal. The manner in which the Naxalites are being glamourised is quite reprehensible.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the UPA has failed to take the internal

dialogue with the Hurriyat Conference to the next level and terrorist strikes have resumed.

Economy and the People

Second, the focus of the nation is on economy. The Vajpayee Government bequeathed to the UPA a vibrant economy that was the envy of even the developed economies. We are concerned that this inheritance will be squandered through fiscal profligacy, high taxation, inflation and wasteful expenditure.

We will highlight the problems of the farmers, the informal sector, the middle classes, the unemployed youth and industrial labour. The growing suicides of farmers in Andhra Pradesh are a matter of deep concern. Between 1 January and 15 May this year, there were 30 suicides; from 16 May to 20 October, the number has touched 1603.

Our Alternative Vision

We are committed to deregulation but we will insist that the terms of globalisation don't leave the people of India vulnerable.

Third, we will resist all violations of democratic norms. The UPA Government, egged on by the Left, has revealed a strongly intolerant streak. It is our fear that this partisan conduct could lead to distortions in the federal structure of India.

Finally, and most importantly, we will highlight our alternative vision of India as a Great Power secure in its nationhood. Whether in economic decision-making, approaches to national security and the conduct of foreign policy, the BJP remains committed to a vibrant and resurgent India. Our objective is to make India a developed nation by 2020. That is our political mission statement.

Our Heritage

The challenges before the BJP are formidable and in the past few days the expectations from me have touched dizzying heights. For five decades, I have been a dedicated soldier for a project that was initiated by Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, nurtured by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay and carried to lofty heights by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. At the same time, I take my inspiration from the selfless patriotism of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Together, they

have given me the strength and the courage to undertake difficult journeys.

The journey ahead, I assure you, will be daunting. It will require all the perseverance, dedication and the collective wisdom of all the *karyakartas* and the goodwill of our entire *parivar*. Above all, it will need selfless teamwork.

On the past four occasions, you honoured me with the post of BJP President, I was fortunate in receiving the unwavering commitment from every wing of the party and *parivar*. I seek no less this time too.

Today, as I undertake this responsibility once again, I would also like to emphasise an additional obligation that has come my way.

Shri Vajpayee

For the past three decades, I have had the great honour to work in partnership with the tallest leader of the BJP – Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It has been a relationship based on implicit trust and mutual respect. Our styles have differed and we have often deferred to each other's wishes but we have always sought to complement each other. A section of the media painted us as rivals. We saw it as a partnership, with Shri Vajpayee the senior leader.

It is this spirit of partnership and mutual accommodation that I wish to commend to the party.

A Bright Future

I am mindful that in the natural course the baton of responsibility will be passed on to my colleagues who have age on their side. The BJP is an army spanning the generations, the regions of India and every social stratum. It is an army blessed with ideological orientation, talent and commitment to the party. Those who occupy senior leadership posts today have decades of involvement, struggle and sacrifice behind them.

We have no fear of the future because we have nurtured the future from the ranks. This is what distinguishes us. This is what makes the BJP a party with a difference.

The BJP was founded in 1980. In two months, our party will

enter its silver jubilee year. I do not know of any other political party in the entire democratic world which in just 25 years has registered such spectacular growth as the BJP.

Let us today resolve to make 2005 a memorable milestone of our journey.

Let us build on our strengths. Let the BJP become the model and inspiration for good governance, good politics and good politicians. Let us re-dedicate ourselves to the service of the Motherland.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Ranchi

24-26 November, 2004

Dear Colleagues,

I welcome you all to this meeting of the National Executive here in Ranchi.

This is the first meeting of the National Executive after the National Council assembled in New Delhi on 27 October and formally elected me as the Party President.

It is taking place in the aftermath of two state assembly elections and before three upcoming state assembly elections.

Outcome of Recent Assembly Elections

The results of the assembly polls in Maharashtra were truly disappointing to all of us. On the basis of performance, the Congress-NCP combine least deserved a renewed mandate, just as, judged by the criterion of performance, the NDA certainly deserved to win a fresh mandate. We thus see a certain disconnect between performance in government and performance in elections. I am not saying that such disconnect exists in every election. Nevertheless, it is a phenomenon that deserves a serious study.

It appears that lack of proper and sustained coordination between the BJP and the Shiv Sena, our alliance partner in Maharashtra, at various levels was one of the principal reasons for our defeat in the elections. We should learn the right lessons from this in evolving our strategy for the forthcoming elections.

I wish to congratulate our unit in Arunachal Pradesh on their impressive performance in the recent elections. Contesting on our

own, we won 9 seats in the Assembly. We had also won both the Lok Sabha seats in the state. This shows the keen desire of the people of the North-East to see that the BJP emerges as a major political force in the region, to serve as a resolute defender of national unity and as a champion of peace, development and social harmony.

Three Crucial Elections Ahead

In the months to come, we will face three crucial elections in Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana. Our objective in these elections is clear.

Jharkhand: In Jharkhand, we must strive to win a fresh mandate. Despite all the odds, our government here has performed fairly well. Indeed, many of the difficulties it faced were a legacy of bad governance that the RJD government in undivided Bihar had left behind. The people of Jharkhand also know that the BJP is the only party that is both firmly committed to, and is fully capable of, harmonising the interests of both tribals and non-tribals in the state. We should impress upon the people that the difficult work of repairing the damage done by the previous government needs five more years of BJP rule to yield the desired results. We should especially caution them that a mandate to our adversaries would be an invitation to a reign of terror, social strife, criminalization of governance and unlimited corruption.

Liberate Bihar from the Reign of *Asuri* (evil) Forces

I would like to dwell at some length on Bihar, where the battle lines are clearly drawn and the bugle will be sounded at a massive rally in Patna on 2 December.

This battle is not only for unseating an incumbent government that belongs to an opposition party. It is actually for emancipating Bihar from 15 years of jungle raj, the kind of which no other state in the country has ever seen. The Rashtriya Janata Dal, which now has the Congress as its partner, has impoverished the state, criminalised politics and governance, and made corruption its creed. In a bizarre act of perversion, its leader has sowed the poisonous seeds of casteism and communalism while masquerading himself as a defender of secularism and social justice. The strangest part

of it all is that he is the darling of the entire pseudo-secular brigade.

I charge the Congress party, the communists and all those who support the RJD with being willing partners in the crime of pauperising Bihar, of reducing this rich and cultured state to such a helpless condition that no section of Bihari population—poor, rich, students, teachers, industrial and agricultural workers, traders, professionals—see any hope of a bright future for themselves in their own state. Worse, they do not even feel safe in their own state, such being the reign of terror, crime and lawlessness unleashed by the RJD. As a result, the largest stream of internal migration in India today is that of the proud but helpless people of Bihar.

The BJP charges the RJD and all its supporters with being assaulters on Bihari Pride, a pride that is rooted in the state's hoary past, in the glorious role it played in the Freedom Movement, in its having been one of the best managed and most richly endowed states in the initial decades of Independence, and in the contribution that its idealistic youth and students made to the defence of democracy under the inspiring leadership of JP.

Friends, the RJD leadership is spreading the self-serving myth that their party is unassailable and is going to win Bihar for another five years. Its calculation is that, in the conditions of mafia-induced fear that prevails in the state, spreading such a myth would prompt the people not to vote for the BJP-JD(U) alliance. We shall puncture this balloon of the RJD's invincibility right at the outset of our campaign. We'll tell the people of Bihar:

"Have no fear. Our alliance is the real and the only alternative, which is capable of liberating Bihar from the *Asuri Shakti* (evil force) that has captured your state. Our alliance is also capable of building a New and Proud Bihar in which every citizen belonging to every caste and community will feel justice done to them, and in which Bihar will be brought back to the track of rapid and all-round development, to occupy its rightful place in the march of a prosperous and strong India."

Haryana: In Haryana, our Party has decided to contest the elections on its own. The incumbent government and the ruling party have done little, either by way of performance or by their relations with the BJP, to create a conducive atmosphere for a united contest against the Congress party. In Haryana our primary objective

will be to increase our own strength in the new Assembly to the maximum possible extent, so that we emerge as an effective alternative to the discredited Congress party.

Politics of Mass Mobilization and Agitation

Friends, my long experience in politics tells me that a political party heightens its strength and brightens its public profile through three types of activities, and I'll mention them in the order of their effectiveness. Of course, the first and the most effective means is one's performance in an election – be it a parliamentary election, assembly election or a local body election. The second is the path of mass mobilization in struggles intended to champion people's causes and to defend the interests of our nation. The third is holding of political rallies.

Due to a combination of factors – the foremost of which was the fact that we were ourselves in government for six long years – our Party has not organized any large-scale nationwide protest action in recent times. Our mass mobilization on the Ayodhya issue in the late '80s and early '90s was the last such effort. However, I am surprised that within six months of the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre, one issue after another is knocking at our doors to be picked up for mass mobilization and mass protest.

Recently, the BJP demonstrated its mass mobilization capabilities by taking up two issues that touched the hearts and minds of every patriot in this country – namely, the insult meted out by the UPA government and the Congress-Communist combine to a national hero, Veer Savarkar, and to a national icon, the Tricolour.

Arrest of Shankaracharya, an Assault on Hinduism

Now, two more issues have arisen that demand a firm and resolute response from the BJP. One has hurt people's pockets and the other has deeply wounded people's faith.

The arrest of the Shankaracharya of Kanchi Math, His Holiness Jayendra Saraswati Swamiji, in a criminal case in Tamil Nadu is unprecedented in the spiritual and political annals of India. The manner of his arrest, the manner of his incarceration,

and the campaign of slander launched against him and the Kanchi Math by the two principal parties in the state, joined by the communists and all the anti-Hindu forces in this country, have jolted the Hindu society like no other event in recent times has.

Two factors have principally contributed to this shocking turn of events. One is the politics of vendetta, confrontation, one-upmanship and social divisiveness that has marred both the society and polity in Tamil Nadu in recent times. The other is the general climate of pseudo-secularism in our country in which maligning of the Hindu faith, hurting of Hindu sentiments and denial of legitimate Hindu interests have been made the ultimate and sole criterion of one's commitment to secularism.

I would like to pose the following questions for the people of India to ponder:

- Why did the then Congress government at the Centre apologise to a certain Muslim seminary in UP when, in 1994, the IB had to conduct a raid on a hostel inside the seminary to nab suspected ISI-backed terrorists with links to a terrorist act in Jammu & Kashmir? The Central government dispatched two senior ministers to the seminary to express regrets for the police action.
- What would happen if a Central minister were to say in a public meeting that he is ashamed of being a Muslim or a Christian?
- Why is raising one's voice against fraudulent conversions of poor tribals and other indigent people considered a communal act in this country?
- Who has created this bizarre and perverse intellectual atmosphere in this country where anything associated with Hinduism, Hindu ethos and Hindu faith is considered communal, obscurantist and – my blood boils when I hear the term – “toxic”?

Preserve the Hindu Ethos to Strengthen Secularism and National Unity

Friends, the time has come to proclaim, and proclaim with all the courage of our conviction, that India is secular principally

because of its Hindu ethos. Remove this Hindu ethos, and there will be no India left. Let us make no mistake: A section of the Congress party, the Communists and some other political forces in this country are conspiring to slowly but systematically erase the Hindu ethos of this country and to obfuscate the basic Hindu identity of our culture and civilization.

In stating this, I do not in the least deny that India is a multi-faith nation. We are proud that our land is home to practically every faith in the world, and every faith here is respected. Adherents of every faith have the same rights and responsibilities. Discrimination on the grounds of religion is alien to our age-old culture and against our Constitution. But let every adversary of ours be warned: if anybody tries to take the cover of secularism to indulge in anti-Hindu politics and statecraft, the BJP will stand in their path like a rock, prepared to make any sacrifices.

Which is why, the BJP, after a lot of inner-party deliberation, decided to associate itself as a party with the public outrage against the arrest of Kanchi Shankracharya. We have made it clear that the law must take its course in the specific case in which allegations of his involvement have been made. But this is not an issue concerning one individual. It has far wider ramifications.

By launching the relay hunger strike and *dharna* on 20 November, we have begun a campaign through which, as in the *Ram Janmabhoomi* issue, we will powerfully counter our ideological and political adversaries, reaffirm the meaning of genuine secularism, strengthen national unity, and rededicate ourselves to the adoption of life-enriching *dharmic* values in society, politics and statecraft. I wish to sincerely thank the former President, Shri R. Venkatraman, former Prime Minister Shri Chandrashekhar, NDA Convenor Shri George Fernandes, and several respected *sadhus* and *sants* for having joined our Party colleagues in this protest action.

Agitation against Price Rise

The other issue on which the Party has launched a programme of mass agitation, culminating in a massive protest

demonstration in front of Parliament on 1 December, is the back-breaking price rise within six months of the UPA government. The Congress party went to the polls tomtomming its slogan: “*Congress ka haath, Aam aadmi ke saath*”. The truth has turned out be: “*Congress ka ghaat, Aam aadmi ke saath*”. This betrayal is acutely felt every time a common man goes to the market to buy items of daily need, every time a housewife brings a new cylinder of cooking gas, and every time a kisan purchases diesel to run his pump.

I call upon our Party workers to conduct a sustained campaign to educate the people about this betrayal and also contrast it with the success of the Vajpayee government in keeping inflation and the prices of essential commodities firmly under check for six long years.

Vigorously Expose the Failures of the UPA Government

We should also vigorously expose the ruinous consequences of the UPA government’s failures on the internal security front. Nothing illustrates this failure more glaringly than the manner in which the government has completely messed up the handling of the Naxal menace. Naxal extremism is spreading its tentacles to newer and hitherto unaffected places. This became frighteningly evident when Naxalites killed 17 cops near Banaras in UP in a landmine explosion last week. The NDA government, after sustained consultations with the governments of all the affected states, had evolved a coordinated and multi-pronged strategy to overcome this grave threat to India’s internal security. The Congress party lost no time in dismantling this strategy by lifting the ban against the PWG in Andhra Pradesh and inviting Naxalites for talks without first insisting that they give up their arms.

As a highly respected retired police officer from Punjab recently bemoaned, “It is indeed strange that, on the one hand the Indian government is assisting Nepal to overcome the challenge posed by Maoists; on the other hand, the same government has legitimized Maoists by inviting them for talks on almost equal footing.”

Similarly, BJP workers everywhere should expose the UPA government’s neglect of the plight of kisans, artisans, workers in

the informal sector and its blind eye towards the unemployed youth. We should tell the people how the much-publicised Food-for-Work programme, launched recently by the Prime Minister, is a badly repackaged version of a similar programme started by the NDA government, with little additional resources allocated to it. In any case, it is a far cry from the promise of providing guaranteed employment for 150 days a year to every able-bodied person in rural areas and urban slums.

The visible slowdown in the implementation of major infrastructure projects, initiated by the NDA government, is a matter of deep concern. Little is being heard of the ambitious National Highway Development Project, the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*, the National Rail *Vikas Yojana* or the *Valmiki-Ambedkar Awaas Yojana* – not to speak about the River Linking Project.

I am mentioning these only to highlight how the focus and the priority of the UPA government have shifted from governance and development to relentless vendetta towards the opposition and daily infighting within the ruling coalition.

Kashmir Issue: Compromise of National Interests will not be Tolerated

Friends, recent months have seen considerable activity, at least in terms of statements and counter-statements, between the governments of India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. The BJP has made it clear on more than one occasion that the process of normalization of relations between our two countries, which had been initiated by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, should continue. However, we are concerned that some of the pronouncements and actions of the UPA government reflect a troubling dilution of clarity and commitment on how to safeguard India's national interests. First came the joint statement issued after the September meeting between Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf in New York, in which India failed to secure a reiteration of Pakistan's commitment to renounce cross-border terrorism as an instrument of its Kashmir policy. Such a commitment was explicitly made in the joint statement issued after the Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting in Islamabad in January this year.

Cross-border terrorism in J&K is still alive and kicking. A loud and rude reminder of this came when terrorists struck in Srinagar, just 200 meters from the venue of the Prime Minister's public meeting on 17 November.

Then came, Dr. Manmohan Singh's statement that "all options are open" to resolve the Kashmir issue. On his part, Gen. Musharraf floated the idea of dividing Jammu & Kashmir in seven parts on religious and regional lines. The Minister of External Affairs responded to this by saying that India was willing to consider this proposal if it was presented in a formal manner.

The Prime Minister has stated in Srinagar that "no new lines can be drawn on the map of the subcontinent". At the same time, there is talk of some lines being "erased" as a part of a "package solution".

The BJP flays this kind of kite-flying and ad-hocism on the part of the UPA government on a vital issue like Kashmir. The Party also demands that the government take both the people and Parliament of India fully into confidence on how it wishes to deal with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

Growing Consensus on the Ayodhya Issue

Friends, an important development during the period between the meetings of the National Council and the National Executive Council was the meeting of the leaders of the constituent parties of the National Democratic Alliance on 10 November. You will recall my remarks on the *Ram Janmabhoomi* issue in my speech at the National Council. While reaffirming our party's unwavering commitment to the construction of a Ram Temple at Ram *Janmasthan* in Ayodhya, I had said that, out of two options for resolving the issue – judicial verdict or a negotiated settlement through dialogue between representatives of the Hindu and Muslim communities, the BJP prefers the latter. Unfortunately, there was a lot of needless speculation, intended to manufacture a controversy, that our NDA allies were unhappy over my remarks.

I am happy to state that the NDA meeting put paid to attempts to create a rift between the BJP and our allies. In the resolution adopted at the meeting, the NDA formally stated its preference for a negotiated settlement arrived at through a process of dialogue

in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, goodwill and peace. I do not think that any right-thinking person can object to this stand.

I am saying this to drive home a larger point. There is a growing body of opinion in the country that there should be no further delay in resolving a sensitive issue like this one. It is significant that, on the Ayodhya issue, the 2004 manifestos of the NDA and the Congress party were saying similar things. Now, the NDA has gone a step further in declaring its preference for the process of dialogue yielding an amicable settlement. Today, from this meeting of the National Executive, I urge the Congress party and all other parties to see the compelling logic and the undeniable desirability of a negotiated settlement, and contribute to the firming up of a national consensus on how to resolve the Ayodhya issue soon.

Dear Colleagues, before concluding, I would like to remind all of you about an important task that we have recently set for ourselves. It is implementation of the decision to begin a Party-wide discussion, right from the central level down to the mandal level, on the 'TASKS AHEAD' document. It has identified a wide range of duties for strengthening the Party ideologically, politically and organisationally. Considering the importance of implementing this decision, I have decided to entrust this responsibility to Shri Venkaiah Naidu.

I look forward to fruitful deliberations during the course of our three-day meeting.

Thank you!
Vande Mataram!!

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Presidential Speeches

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU

National Executive

Hyderabad

11 January, 2004

I extend a warm welcome to all of you here in Hyderabad

The National Executive of the Bharatiya Janata Party is meeting in the joyous afterglow of our resounding victories in the recently concluded Assembly elections. What political pundits had called the electoral “Semi-Finals” has resulted in the BJP trouncing the Congress in three out of four States where it was in power, and the NDA demolishing it in four out of five States that went to the polls. The BJP has formed its governments in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The Mizo National Front, which is a part of the NDA, has formed the government in Mizoram.

The only consolation for the Congress in its hour of humiliation has been its success in retaining its government in Delhi, albeit with a reduced majority.

Ingredients of a successful Election Strategy

I heartily congratulate each and every worker of the BJP in the States that went to the polls, and also the State units that enthusiastically lent a helping hand, for this great victory. We raised the right issues, which touched the lives of the common people in the respective States, and carried out a sustained and systematic mass campaign on these issues. We successfully exposed the utter failure of the incumbent Congress governments to fulfil their promises on such basic needs as *bijlee, sadak and paani*, and thereby channelised the people’s anger against the Congress in the direction for change.

We also effectively highlighted the many landmark achievements and initiatives of the NDA Government at the Centre, which enabled the people to see the sharp contrast between the anti-people and anti-development balance sheet of the Congress and the pro-people and pro-development track record of the BJP. In this sense, our victory in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh was not merely on strength of the anti-incumbency vote; rather, it was also a positive vote in favour of the BJP and a mark of popular support for Shri Vajpayee's Government at the Centre.

What contributed to our electoral success was also a set of other crucial factors: enormous hard work for a prolonged period, meticulous planning, its proper execution, able guidance by leaders at all levels and perfect coordination between the Centre and State units of the Party. We received proper *margdarshan* from Shri Atalji and Shri Advaniji at every stage of the campaign. Shri Atalji's mammoth election meetings made a big difference to the final tally in the three States.

I would especially like to place on record, with deepest appreciation, the stupendous hard work put in by the three Chief Ministers, and the presidents and office-bearers of the Party in the States that went to polls.

Congress Party, Facing an Uncertain Future

Friends, what happened in the recent Assembly elections is not a simple victory for the BJP and the NDA, nor is it an ordinary defeat for the Congress. Never in the past has the morale of the leaders as well as the rank and file of the Congress been shattered so badly. The situation, as far as the Congress is concerned, can perhaps only be compared with its thumping defeat in the 1977 general elections after the lifting of the Emergency Rule. However, although the Congress was utterly demoralized then, it did not face any uncertainty over its very future. Unlike now, there was no strong and cohesive national party that could challenge its dominance of Indian politics.

Now, for the first time in its 119-year-old history, under its present leadership, the Congress Party is worried about its very survival. A prominent news magazine recently described its President's unparalleled achievement for the party with a striking

cover-title: “Honey, I Shrunk the Congress!”, taking off on the title of a popular comedy film “Honey, I Shrunk the Kid!”

This is what has happened to the Congress: its mass base has shrunk, its prestige has shrunk, its capacity to effectively intervene in the affairs of the nation has shrunk, and the credibility of its leadership has shrunk. The Congress is today a party without unity, without clarity, without ability, and without acceptance among the people.

2003: A good year for India and the BJP

Dear colleagues, the year 2003 was very good for the country and for the BJP. In addition to annexing three big States from the Congress, we have also dealt confidence-shattering blows to the Congress in several by-elections – notably in the Sholapur Parliamentary by-election and the Songadh Assembly by-election. Although we have improved our position in Delhi, our failure to defeat the Congress was certainly disappointing. Our colleagues in Delhi must dispassionately analyse the reasons for this failure and apply quick correctives, so that we are able to repeat our splendid performance in the forthcoming Parliamentary polls.

The formation of a BJP Government in Arunachal Pradesh was another important gain for the Party in 2003. Our influence in the North-East is steadily growing. We have gained many friends in the region. We are Party in Nagaland government. The Congress is rapidly getting marginalized. Our Government has succeeded in strengthening the atmosphere of peace, normalcy and development in the North-East. I urge our Party workers in the region to make the best use of this situation to brighten the prospects of the BJP and its allies in the coming elections.

2003 was a great year for the Party for yet another reason. The regularity and depth of interaction between the Party and the Government at all levels increased further. The Hon’ble Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have always given us time whenever we needed to discuss party related matters with them. They have also taken the party into confidence on all major public issues. Our colleagues in the Government have always been receptive to suggestions and feedback from the Party. I am happy to note that the interaction between the Party leadership and the

cadre, both at the center and in the states, has improved. Interaction between the BJP and the fraternal parties in the NDA has also increased. I hope that the Chief Ministers and the Party Presidents in the states where the BJP is in power will follow this useful practice.

The holding of a three-day *Chintan Baiithak* in Mumbai in July last year was a major milestone in the Party's history. It helped us to carry out an in-depth review of the performance of both the Party and the Government. I am happy to inform the National Executive that the Government has accepted and implemented most of the ideas and suggestions that were presented at the *Chintan Baiithak*.

In this context, I warmly congratulate Finance Minister Shri Jaswant Singhji for his bold set of announcements early this week, giving a boost to many sectors of the economy. They have further brightened the Feel Good atmosphere in the country. The Finance Minister deserves special praise for announcing a Rs. 50,000-crore fund for infrastructure projects, including rural infrastructure.

Organizational elections have been successfully concluded in 22 States. These were held in a cordial atmosphere and the office-bearers were elected unanimously. Other States are yet to complete their organizational elections.

In year 2003, we undertook several novel programmes such as *Samarpan*, *Sahyog* and *Samvad* to activate the organizational network at all levels. This yielded desired results. I can see that there is an increased sense of involvement now. Union Ministers, despite their busy schedules, have put in expected efforts as and when asked by the Party.

In this sense, we have re-learned an old lesson, which is at the core of the organizational philosophy of the BJP. Ours is a party of *karyakartas*. They are the heart and soul of our Party. We must care for them, we must listen to them, we must encourage them, we must guide them, and we must give them the opportunity to involve themselves fully in the activities of the Party. We are also a party that believes in team work, that believes in camaraderie among office bearers. We can achieve best possible results only through constant interaction. I have tried to promote this to the best of my abilities.

India's spectacular progress under the NDA Government

Dear colleagues, I said earlier that the year 2003 was good both for the country and for the Party. I described how it has been good for the Party. As far as the country is concerned, all of you are aware of how good the year has been. India's economy is booming. Ours is among the fastest growing economies of the world. Food production is steadily growing. With this year's good monsoon we can expect our hard working kisans to achieve better results. Our successes in the manufacturing sector, coupled with our continued successes in Information Technology, are attracting global attention and applause. The rupee is becoming stronger. Our foreign exchange reserves have crossed the \$100 billion level.

The various developmental initiatives started by our Government have begun to yield results. Their fruits are now becoming visible. The best examples of this are the National Highway Development Project, *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* (PMGSY), *Antyodaya Anna Yojana*, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, *Kisan Credit Card scheme*, and our shining successes in the telecom sector. Recently, we have launched the Artisan Credit Card scheme to benefit crores of workers in the handloom and handicraft sectors. The important decision we took for the welfare and empowerment of SCs and STs have also been highly appreciated.

I must mention here that India's achievements on the foreign policy front have truly been unprecedented. The entire world has come to recognize Shri Atalji as a statesman par excellence. Under his leadership, India's stature in the world has risen enormously. His latest foreign policy success has been his historic visit to Islamabad where he provided visionary leadership both to the 12th SAARC Summit as well as to the breaking of ice in the frozen relations between India and Pakistan.

It must be noted here that, as far as Indo-Pak relations are concerned, our Government has achieved this breakthrough without compromising on our fight against cross-border terrorism. Indeed it is Pakistan which had to give a commitment that it will not allow anybody to use its territory for terrorist activities against India.

The outcome of the Prime Minister's visit to Islamabad has created a groundswell of hope and goodwill both in India and Pakistan, and in the entire sub-continent. It is now being felt by

one and all that whereas the Congress governments created and aggravated the Kashmir problem, Shri Atalji and his Government alone can resolve this problem.

This expectation is also buttressed by the rapid return of peace and normalcy in J&K, following the historic free and fair elections in that State in October 2002.

Transform Party's Campaign into a People's Campaign

It is now the responsibility of the Party and the government to intensify their communication activities to reach the message of India's all-round progress to the masses. I would like both the Party machinery and the government machinery to accelerate the tempo of publicity. There is already a "Feel Good Factor" in the country. We should endeavour to make it a Feel Great Factor.

The people of India are already desirous of bringing back Shri Atalji's government because of its strong performance. It should now be our endeavour to convert this desire into a firm resolve, cutting across the barriers of politics, region, religion, caste, class, language and gender, and embracing even those sections which have somewhat remained aloof from BJP so far. In other words, we should transform our election campaign from a party's campaign into a peoples' campaign.

We should especially make all-out efforts to reach out to the youth. Let us generate a massive thinking process among all sections of society, especially among the youth, focused on the theme of "Their 50 Years Vs. Our 5 Years". Let us pose the question: "Why did India lag behind in development, in spite of being blessed by an ancient civilization, perennial rivers, fertile land, hard working people, skilled artisans, good professionals, great intellect, and vast human resources? Why did India lag behind, when even smaller nations in Asia marched ahead in a spectacular manner? The Congress with its wrong priorities, unsound policies, misgovernance and corrupt practices more or less wasted the nearly fifty years that it was at the helm. In contrast, the NDA has been able to achieve so much in such a short time. This being the case, why should the Congress be supported to disturb this new beginning?"

Our Priorities for the next Five Years

We should also boldly explain what our priorities and plans are for the coming five years. A stronger attack on poverty, a faster ending of regional disparities, bridging the urban-rural divide, creation of employment and self-employment opportunities on a far larger-scale, taking up for implementation ambitious projects such as the River-Linking Project, a massive effort at improving primary healthcare, primary education, drinking water and sanitation and other social sector services, making agriculture profitable even for small and poor farmers, revival of small scale and cottage industries, social justice and economic empowerment of our SC, ST, OBC and Most BC brethren, gender justice and further empowerment of women, effective steps for population control, further decentralization of powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions – these will be our priorities.

If I can be candid in saying so, our priority in the coming years will be to enable that underdeveloped part of India, and that underdeveloped section of Indian society, to shine as brightly as the developed one that is doing so today.

I propose to set up a committee of Party functionaries and experts who are our well-wishers to prepare a Vision Document for the coming five years.

Reach out to new sections of Society

Friends, I urge all of you, and I urge each and every worker of BJP, to carry the message of all these historic achievements and landmark initiatives of the NDA Government, as well as our vision for the future, to every nook and corner in this country. We should intensify our efforts to reach out to those sections of our diverse society that have so far remained away from us. That new social classes are willing to support the BJP became strikingly clear in the recent Assembly elections, when tribals rejected the Congress with a vengeance and voted for our candidates.

In this context, I especially urge you to reach out to our minority sisters and brothers, who have seen through the self-serving propaganda against the BJP conducted by the Congress and other opposition parties. I also appeal to our minority brethren: “Boldly cross the mental barrier of hesitation, vote for the BJP and

strengthen Shri Atalji's leadership. You have nothing to lose, except the false notions created by our opponents. However, you have much to gain from India's faster and more broad-based development under our government."

Create a Wave in favour of the BJP and NDA

We should create – indeed, we can create – a big wave of popular support in favour of the BJP and the NDA. This will enable us to secure a renewed and much larger mandate, which is our goal for Mission 2004. As Shri Advaniji has repeatedly told us, the BJP has not yet reached a saturation level. Look back at where we were in 1984. We had only 2 seats in the Lok Sabha then. In each of the subsequent elections we have continued to surprise both our opponents and ourselves by increasing our tally. We can do it yet again.

Our biggest asset is our leadership. Shri Atalji has emerged as the tallest Indian leader in modern times. He is widely hailed as the "Great Unifier". He is seen as an exemplary practitioner of the Coalition Dharma, due to which he has made the NDA the first functioning model of Political Unity in Ideological Diversity. We have a strong track record of performance during the past five years. We have established our credibility as a reliable party among our partners and together with them found a cohesive alliance. We have a vast organizational network. More and more sections of Indian society, in more and more regions of our vast country, are willing to support us.

The contrast with the Congress and the rest of the opposition is stark. The opposition is disunited. It is leaderless. Which is why I have said that in the coming elections the choice before the people is Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee versus? In their inability to unite under the leadership of the Congress and their refusal to accept its President as a prime ministerial candidate, the opposition parties are toying with the comical idea of forming two platforms to defeat the NDA. They will not succeed. Clearly the advantage lies with the BJP and the NDA. We succeeded in Operation 2003. Let us now get ready to make Mission 2004 a grander success.

This is the message that I would like all of us to carry from Hyderabad. I call upon our *karyakartas* to "Reach every village,

Walk every street, Knock at every door, and Talk to every voter". All of us have to work with complete unity at all levels. All of us have to work overtime. We should be driven by a winning instinct. Needless to add, BJP Chief Ministers have to accelerate the developmental work of their governments. We should not get distracted by anything. Like Arjuna taking aim at the eye of the bird, and seeing nothing else in the surroundings, we should aim at success in Mission 2004.

Resources are very crucial for the election campaign. I propose that we set up a *Chunav Sahay Nidhi* as a one-time measure for collecting contributions for the campaign. People can offer Rs. 10,000, Rs. 5,000 or Rs. 1,000. This amount will be accepted only through cheque. The names of all the donors will be declared on the Party's website for transparency. I suggest that this be made into a nationwide campaign.

I would like the National Executive to consider and approve an Action Plan for Mission 2004. I would like the General Secretaries to prepare a detailed Calendar of Programmes before the formal start of the election process.

Let us march for the Battle. Victory is ours!

Thank you!
Vande Mataram!!

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National Council

New Delhi

6 February, 2004

Respected Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, National Council members, assembled dignitaries and friends,

Namaste!

First of all, I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister Shri LK Advani for the affection and confidence reposed in me by proposing my name for Presidentship. I would also like to thank all members of the National Council and State Council for re-electing me as President of the Party for the second time.

Ours is the only Party which conducts organisational elections regularly from Mandal level to National level. Internal democracy is the strength of political parties. If our Party has grown from strength to strength, it is principally because we have remained committed to both inner-party democracy and inner-party discipline.

At the National Council meeting on 3 August, 2002, which was held after I was elected President of the Party for the first time, I had said that I was just a disciplined *karyakarta* who has grown with the organisation. I am still a *karyakarta* by heart. I feel humbled by the responsibility that the Party has entrusted to me. I assure you that I shall continue to discharge this responsibility to the best of my abilities, always guided by the legacy of ideology and idealism that Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay have bequeathed to us.

Today, I pay homage to the memory of one of my esteemed predecessors, Shri Kushabhau Thakre, who left us recently.

When I look back at the 18 months of my previous term, it gives me the needed satisfaction to move forward. Together with my colleagues – both those who are office-bearers and those who are in the Government – we have been able to galvanize the Party and achieve good results. In particular, our success in Operation 2003, in which we won resounding victories in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, has consolidated the BJP's position in the country's politics.

Indeed, this meeting of the National Council is taking place in the background of the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, which we have termed as Mission 2004. I have no doubt that the BJP will be crowned with success in this historic electoral battle.

Friends, we gather here today with an enormous sense of pride and achievement, and a huge burden of responsibility.

For the past six years, the Bharatiya Janata Party under the leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has been at the helm of a momentous experiment to change the face of the motherland to which we have dedicated ourselves.

At the time of the creation of the National Democratic Alliance Government, we promised the people a proud and prosperous India. To us in the BJP, it was more than an election promise.

It was a mission statement.

Today, as we begin preparations for the next Lok Sabha election, I can proudly claim that we have succeeded in unleashing the potential of India.

After 50 years of despair and wasted opportunities, India has recovered its bearings. It has rediscovered its soul. Its energies have been harnessed.

In ancient times, India was the *vishwa guru*, the world leader, at the cutting edge of the sciences, the arts and a trading centre of the world.

We lost that position. We lost our freedom and our self-confidence. We moved into the Dark Ages. We lowered our sights.

Today, we have set the stage for reclaiming our rightful inheritance. We have set our goals and we have set them high.

- India must become a developed country by 2020.
- India must become an economic superpower.
- India must once again be *jagat guru*.

Under the leadership of Shri Vajpayee, India is geared to making this leap forward.

The NDA Government has created the environment for India to harness its creative energies. The Prime Minister has shown the way in discarding a negative mindset and the culture of cynicism.

Vajpayeeji has shown us that our dreams are for real.

Vajpayeeji has told us that we cannot be second-best. He has inspired us to think big.

Vajpayeeji has made it proud to be Made in India.

The country's image has brightened and its standing has risen significantly in the international comity. Before the 1998 Parliamentary elections, we had described Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee as "The Man India Awaits". Today we can proudly say that he is "The Statesman India Adores and the World Admires".

Today, we can see and feel the change in the mood of the country. The seeds we planted some six years ago are gradually beginning to yield fruit.

The development process in India is visible and being felt.

We have reason to be happy that our Government gave priority to rural development through initiatives like the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana*, which is the largest Food-for-Work programme since Independence, rural housing, remunerative prices to farmers, the *Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana*, massive rural connectivity programme, Kisan Credit Cards to 3.5 crore farmers, crop insurance scheme, chain of cold storages, rural godowns, increase in rural lending by the banks from Rs. 40000 to Rs. 70000 crore.

All these speak of our commitment to comprehensive development of agriculture and rural India.

In the past five years, India has witnessed a Connectivity Revolution, encompassing highways, rural roads, railways, ports and airports. The fruits of the Golden Quadrilateral, PMGSY and the telecom revolution are already being felt. There is also an unprecedented boom in housing construction, made possible by a steep reduction in interest rates.

India is today an IT superpower. The world respects us. It also fears our abilities.

In time, we will feel the benefits of power reforms, the interlinking of rivers and global access for agriculture produce.

We have taken India out of the era of shortages. We have put hoarders and blackmarketeers out of business.

By easing controls, we are on the verge of making the *dalal* redundant.

We have many milestone legislations to our credit like, Anti-Defection Law, Open Ballot Elections in Rajya Sabha, right-sizing the Ministries and Proxy Voting by Defence personnel.

We have built the foundations of a better life for our children and grandchildren. They will have opportunities none of us could dream of.

Our development is not only visible, it is credible.

Today, in the international community, India counts.

Indians have always mattered in the world. Today, India matters.

India is on the road to greatness. We want this journey to be smooth and uninterrupted.

In this election, every Indian has real choices.

- Do you want to go forward or do you want to go backward?
- Do you want continuity or do you want disruption?
- Do you want greatness or do you want mediocrity?
- Do you want a leader or do you want a question mark?
- Do you want the dark days to return?

In this election, there are only three issues:

- Development, development, development.
- Vajpayee, Vajpayee, Vajpayee.
- India, India, India.

For us, development is not a lifeless economic statistic. It is not only about GDP and BOP. It is ultimately about the quality of life.

We in the BJP remain committed to integral humanism which looks at development in its totality.

For us, development cannot be separated from care, compassion and good citizenship.

It is rooted in family values. It involves a cultural renaissance. It means strengthening of our *Bharatiyata*, which we also call *Hindutva*.

For five decades, India has been hostage to the wrong policies pursued by the Congress Party. These policies have cost India dearly.

The policies of the Congress Party have sown discord and division. They have diverted the attention of India from the real tasks. They kept us backward for 50 years.

The legacy of the Congress is dismal.

- The Congress devalued institutions from panchayats to parliament.
- The Congress compromised India's federal structure. It created tensions between the Centre and the States. It misused Article 356 for petty political ends.
- The Congress undermined the independence of the judiciary.
- The Congress fostered skewed development. It neglected regions. It added to the urban-rural divide. It developed a vested interest in keeping India poor.
- The Congress killed the creative impulses of India. It built a corrupt system of licences and controls. It taxed people recklessly. It created crony socialism. It equated India with shoddiness.
- The Congress perverted the meaning of secularism. It turned minorities into vote banks and wooed them with fear. It made Hindu a term of abuse and derision. It lived off social tensions.
- The Congress equated democracy with dynasty. It equated India with one family.

The Congress of today bears no resemblance to the Congress that led the freedom struggle. Today's Congress is not the Congress of Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Rajaji and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Today's Congress is a Party without ideology and direction. It has no values, no character and no faith in Indians.

The NDA Government has been working tirelessly to undo the damage inflicted on the country by the Congress. Where the

Congress created problems, our government has attempted to solve them.

- We have been hard on terrorism but we have also tackled the roots of terrorism. Under the NDA, there have been free and fair elections in Kashmir which, in turn has undermined terrorism. Today, there is real hope that peace will return to Jammu and Kashmir. We are determined to create the conditions for the Kashmiri Pandits to return to their homes.
- We have dealt with the problem of insurgency in the North-East through a combination of toughness and fairness.
- The Prime Minister has made the menace of cross-border terrorism an international concern. With remarkable show of statesmanship, he has impressed upon our neighbours that mutual friendship is the only way for regional prosperity. Last month in Islamabad, Pakistan, for the first time, agreed to disallow the use of its territory for any terrorist activities.
- The NDA has tried to confront communal tensions by seeking a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the Ayodhya dispute. We are hopeful that the ongoing attempt to find a meaningful solution will be successful. The future of India, we are convinced, lies in all communities living harmoniously bound by a common attachment to Mother India.

Friends, as we approach the 2004 general election, it is apparent that it is the BJP that has become the stable pole of Indian politics. We are setting the agenda; our opponents are caught up in negativism.

For the BJP, it has been a satisfying journey. Exactly 20 years ago, we had just 2 members in Lok Sabha. Since 1996, we have emerged as the single largest political party in three successive elections.

We have expanded – numerically, socially and geographically. From the Andamans to Arunachal and from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, the BJP is a force throughout India. In 2003, we secured our first government in the north-east, in Arunachal

Pradesh. The BJP is also a partner in the Nagaland Government.

Today, there are BJP-led governments in seven states. In addition, we are partners in two other state governments.

We have Overseas Friends of the BJP in the Indian diaspora. Of late, we have also instituted party-to-party contacts with organisations overseas.

The continuous and steady growth of the BJP is a consequence of the dedication and hard work of the thousands of our workers. Our *karyakartas* are our ambassadors, the lifeline between the people and the party.

In just 24 years, the BJP has made its mark on public life in India. We are a party with a difference.

- We have a distinctive, nationalist ideology.
- We have a tried, tested and trusted leadership.
- We have a range of competent, second-generation leaders.
- We have credibility in the eyes of the people.
- We have acceptability. The people of India have gradually seen through the campaign of calumny and misrepresentation by our opponents.

This election provides us with an opportunity to further expand our base, both socially and geographically.

I must emphasise that the BJP is under-represented among a section of India's minorities. This is due to the climate of fear and alarmism created by those who view minorities as their special vote banks.

The conduct of the NDA Government should have dispelled these fears.

The BJP believes in a policy of justice for all and appeasement of none. It is committed to the equality of all religions. It stands for the peaceful coexistence of all faiths and the resolution of all outstanding problems through sustained dialogue.

Of late, I see a big change in the attitude of minorities, especially our Muslim brethren, towards our Government and our Party. The peace initiatives taken by the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the sincere but firm way in which our Government has been dealing with the Kashmir issue, have made a positive impression on the minorities.

At the National Executive meeting in Hyderabad, I had called upon the minorities to “cross the barrier of their own mental hesitation” and support the BJP. This seems to be happening. It is now upto our workers to seize this opportunity and secure the support of minorities by removing their apprehensions, if any.

It is for this reason that I call upon all Party members to make redoubled efforts to reach out to members of minority communities. Earlier, as a result of the disinformation campaign by our adversaries, they remained aloof from our Party.

The BJP is a party of Indians, by Indians and for Indians. We stand in sharp contrast to the Congress.

- We are growing; they are shrinking.
- We are confident; they are diffident.
- We are united; they are divided.
- Our leadership has ability; their leadership is a liability.
- Our sights are clear; theirs are blurred.
- We have vision; they suffer from illusion.
- We look forward; they look backward.
- We have a future; they have a past.
- We build coalitions on conviction; they cobble theirs as compulsion.
- We are proud of our performance; they run away from their record.
- We have a universally accepted leader; they have a big question mark.

In this coming election, the BJP has set the agenda. We will seek a renewed mandate on the strength of our Prime Minister, our performance in government and our ability to take India to a prosperous future.

Every election has a context and this election will be about leadership and development. On both counts, our record inspires confidence.

The NDA has justified the faith people reposed in it five years ago. In Prime Minister Vajpayee we have a leader who inspires confidence and who unites the country. The Prime Minister is our symbol; the BJP is his army.

This is what the election will be about. Do not be derailed by extraneous issues. Do not allow the Congress to divert attention from the main issues.

The Congress is vulnerable; it has no answers to India's success. Pin them down to their failures, corner them.

Remind them of the record of their state governments – about Telgi in Karnataka and Maharashtra, about infighting in Kerala and Punjab and about non-governance in Assam and Uttaranchal.

Never fail to remind the Congress of the black hole they have helped create in Bihar.

Ask tough questions but keep the campaign dignified.

We not only have a battle to win; we have a political culture to uphold. The eyes of the whole world will be on the BJP.

We will fight the election on a progressive platform. A committee is already working on the BJP's Vision Document. It will be released in the next few weeks.

Our thrust will be on making India an economic superpower and fighting poverty through the creation of wealth.

India is shining. We will make it glow.

For the BJP, this will be a landmark election. We have defined the target of Mission 2004 as 300 seats for the BJP and a 2/3rd majority for the NDA.

It may seem a high target. It will become a realisable target if the party campaign is elevated to a people's campaign.

Use the election campaign to draw in people who have traditionally kept out of politics. Draw in the youth, draw in women, draw in minorities, draw in the kisans, and draw in the dalits.

Involve every Indian who is proud to be an Indian today.

Let every Indian who is feeling good be a soldier for Vajpayeeji so that he can feel better.

As we approach the election, our party machinery must be ready to take on the challenge.

Thanks to the special attention by Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Advani ji, there is excellent rapport between the party and the government. There is regular interaction between the leadership and the cadre.

There is harmony between the party and fraternal organizations of the nationalist *parivar*.

We have before us the action plan approved by the National Executive. I call upon Party units at all levels to quickly complete the task of work distribution and assign specific duty to each individual. The foremost responsibility is to ensure the success of the ongoing “*Atal Sandesh Abhiyan*”, whose slogan is: “Go to every village, Walk every street, Knock at every door, and Contact every voter”.

As a part of the *Atal Sandesh Abhiyan*, we plan to hold 100 rallies in different parts of the country. I urge you to make these rallies a huge success. These rallies should be supplemented by conventions of intellectuals and professionals in every Parliamentary constituency. Simultaneously, I would like you to take up mobilisation of resources under the “*Chunav Sahayata Nidhi*” campaign with utmost seriousness.

To succeed, we must maintain the team spirit. We have always succeeded when we have entered the battle united and fought as a team.

We have already won the first round of the battle. Let us now finish the job.

Vande Mataram!
Bharat Mata ki Jai!!



National Executive

Mumbai

22-24 June, 2004

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to welcome you all to this important and first meeting of the newly constituted National Executive in Mumbai. We are meeting for the first time after the elections to the 14th Lok Sabha. The verdict of the people has gone against our expectations – indeed, against everybody’s expectations, including those who are in Government now.

Naturally, our party has to introspect at all levels on why we could not succeed in retaining the mandate of the people. We had the finest leadership. The performance of the NDA government, under the able leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was good. Our government took the country forward impressively during its six years in office. The development it achieved, and the many developmental initiatives it launched, will go down in history. Yet, our performance fell way below our expectations. It is necessary to conduct a comprehensive, in-depth and objective analysis of the election results and pinpoint the factors that contributed to this setback.

The Parliamentary Board of the Party, which met in Delhi two days ago, has taken a decision to entrust this responsibility to a small committee. I shall, at the end of this Executive, announce the names of the members of this Committee.

Three principles of introspection

I must point out that the BJP has a distinctive culture of introspection and analysis, which every functionary of the party

should understand. I would like to point out three guiding principles for conducting this exercise.

1. Our approach to introspection and analysis should always be positive and constructive. In other words, analysis cannot be only for finding out what went wrong; rather, its principal purpose should to enable us to overcome the shortcomings and forge ahead with greater confidence and resolve.
2. Our party does not believe in blame game and finger-pointing. Unlike most parties in the Indian political system, the BJP is not a personality-based party. We believe in the principle of collective responsibility – both in victory and in defeat.
3. Collective responsibility, however, does not preclude the need for individual accountability. Each one of us, at an individual level, has to examine our own decisions and actions and weigh their contribution to the overall outcome of the elections.

As the President of the party, I have to admit my responsibility not only for my individual actions, but also for the performance of the party as a whole. I sincerely thank my leaders as well as my colleagues for the confidence they have continued to repose in me. I pledge to work with redoubled energy and strive my utmost to fulfil the high responsibility placed once again on my shoulders.

**No anti-NDA wave and no pro-Congress wave
Friends, let us analyse.**

Was there an anti-NDA wave? No. There was generally a pro-Vajpayee and pro-BJP mood all over the country.

Was there a pro-Congress wave? No. This is clear from the fact that the Congress party managed to win only 7 seats more than the BJP. It drew a blank in Kerala; was reduced to only 8 seats in Karnataka; could not increase its tally in Maharashtra – indeed, it lagged behind the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance – in spite of forging a much talked-about alliance with the NCP; it managed to win only one seat each in Punjab and Uttaranchal. All the States I have just mentioned are ruled by the Congress Party.

The Congress fared worse than before in Rajasthan,

Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, which are BJP-ruled States. It failed to make any gains in Orissa. Its performance was dismal in the North East. In Assam, it could not improve its position in spite of being in the government. Even in Gujarat, where the BJP is said not to have fared well, we won more seats than the Congress, although it was below our expectations.

Therefore, it is completely untenable for the Congress to claim that the people's mandate has gone in its favour. It is said that the rural people were unhappy with the NDA and they did not vote for us. This is not true. Results show that most of the seats that the BJP won are actually rural constituencies.

It is also claimed that the poor people were not happy with the NDA and they too did not vote for us. This is also not true. As a matter of fact, most of the constituencies where we won fall in areas that are poor and backward. These are in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, North Karnataka, Orissa, and Vidarbha and Marathwada in Maharashtra.

As we examine the factors that contributed to our poor performance, it emerges that we were, perhaps, overconfident in our assessment of the situation. Overconfidence might have led to complacency in certain places. Our workers and supporters in some constituencies felt that they could take it easy, since the BJP and the NDA were "anyway going to form the Government".

The damage due to complacency among our workers and traditional voters was, in several constituencies, compounded by the local situation. We did not give adequate weightage to the anti-incumbency factor operating against many of our sitting MPs while re-nominating them. This cost us dearly. Nearly 50% of our sitting MPs failed to get re-elected. This is a matter of serious concern, requiring close study and corrective action.

The outcome of the recent election shows no clear or uniform national pattern. The preference of the electorate differed from state to state, so much so that it seems that the final verdict is actually an aggregate of state verdict influenced mostly by local factors.

In addition to the factors that I have just mentioned, in a few states we suffered on account of the alliance factor. I am not saying this to put the blame on our allies, but only as a matter of fact. We have no regrets.

The BJP is firmly in favour of further strengthening the National Democratic Alliance and our relationship with the supporting parties. It is true that some allies left the NDA prior to the elections. In every single case they left on their own. We did not leave any of our allies.

Yes, we have to identify the shortcomings and correct the lapses. We have to learn lessons from the past, and move forward leaving the past behind.

Congress Party's self-serving interpretation of the mandate

Friends, in the aftermath of the unexpected election results our adversaries, especially the Congress and the Communists, have given a totally false spin to the people's verdict. The Congress claims that it has won the people's mandate. Numbers belie this claim. The Congress Party has managed to win only 145 seats. The Congress and its pre-poll allies could win only 218 seats, which is far below the half way mark of 272 necessary to form the Government.

It is of course true that they have been able to cobble together the necessary majority to form the Government. The ruling outfit calls itself the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Far from being united, it presents a picture of disunity right from the beginning. Far from being progressive, its contradictions and compromises will take the country in a regressive direction. Far from being an alliance, it is merely an opportunistic arrangement for power sharing.

I do not wish to comment much on how this government was formed and has been blundering along for the past month or so, because these aspects are covered in the draft political resolution to be placed before the National Executive.

Dangerous Portents of competitive Pseudo-secularism

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to a very disturbing aspect of the mindset of those who are a part of the new government or are associated with it. This is the phenomenon of competitive pseudo-secularism. It is shocking that the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA does not even mention cross-border terrorism, as if that menace is over.

Within a week of the formation of the new government, 33 BSF Jawans and their family members were killed in a terrorist attack in Kashmir. A few days ago, security forces unearthed yet another Lashkar-e-Toiba conspiracy to assassinate Shri Narendra Modi. Four persons, including two Pakistani nationals, were killed in a police encounter. What is shocking is that certain pseudo-secular parties and organizations are using this incident in their anti-BJP campaign and also trying to make it into a Hindu-Muslim issue. They are projecting it as a case of human rights violation, forgetting that human rights are for the protection of innocent citizens and cannot be misused for the protection of terrorists and anti-nationals. They had the audacity to say that the attack on Akshardham was also stage-managed! These parties were even in the forefront of organizing bandhs in defence of the terrorists.

The BJP would like to caution these pseudo-secular parties that, for short-term gains, they are encouraging and emboldening anti-national and terrorist forces with their pronouncements. It is the same mindset which has guided the new government to promise repeal of POTA, ignoring the continued threat of terrorism. This is a highly dangerous trend, which poses a threat to our national security, national unity and even to India's democratic system.

As a nationalist party, it is our duty to educate the people and arouse public opinion about the consequences of competitive pseudo-secularism. The BJP will take up a major nationwide campaign on this highly disturbing issue.

Performing the Role of an effective Opposition

Friends, we shall perform the role of an effective opposition with a constructive and responsible approach. We have patience to sit in the opposition. We shall spare no opportunity to expose the contradictions, compulsions, compromises and failures of the new government. Our campaign against the tainted Ministers in the Manmohan Singh Government is only the beginning. We shall soon launch nationwide campaign against the Congress and Communist parties' vile attempts to re-falsify India's history in the name of "desaffronisation" of text books.

When national interests and issues of people's welfare are involved, we will support the Government. But it is for the

Government to come forward and seek our support. It is the Government's responsibility to demonstrate that it will carry forward the tradition of consensus-building on major issues, which was initiated by the Vajpayee Government.

Also, as Shri Advaniji has rightly pointed out, the only sensible meaning of the highly fragmented mandate, in which no party or pre-poll alliance has won a majority, is that the people of India want the new Government to actively seek the cooperation of the opposition on all important issues.

However, it is crystal clear that the new Government is in no mood to follow this sensible message given by the electorate. Rather, it is a vindictive government that wants, wherever it can, to undo the good legacy of the Vajpayee government. Therefore, our Party has to be extremely vigilant both inside and outside Parliament. We must stoutly defend all the good work done by our government. We must also pressurize the Congress-led government to carry forward the good initiatives of the Vajpayee government.

It is worth mentioning here that very important development initiatives of the Vajpayee government, such as the National Highway Development Project, *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*, *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana*, *Swajaldhara*, *Antyodaya Anna Yojana*, and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, do not even find a mention either in the new government's Common Minimum Programme or in the President's Address to the Joint House of Parliament.

Party's New Initiative: Subject Committees

Our party's representation in Parliament presents a good blend of experience and youthfulness, of proven capability and promising new talent. Many of our members have excelled themselves both in governance and in opposition in the past. We are indeed blessed with the leadership of Shri Atalji and Shri Advaniji in the Lok Sabha. In the Upper House, we have the leadership of Shri Jaswant Singhji. Therefore, we can have full confidence in our Parliamentary wing to do a great job.

In this context, we have decided to create a new category of structures within the Party organization to draw upon our colleagues' rich experience in governance and in parliamentary

work. These are subject-specific committees, somewhat on the pattern of Standing Committees in Parliament, comprising our MPs, members of the National Executive and non-Party experts. This will impart a new dimension to our Party's work both inside and outside Parliament.

Gear up for the coming Assembly Elections

Esteemed colleagues, many formidable tasks lie ahead of us. A draft Working Paper on "Tasks Ahead" will be placed before the National Executive for discussion. This discussion will continue beyond Mumbai. We have planned to hold a *Chintan Baithak* in the month of July. Its main purpose is to deliberate on how to further expand the Party's social and political base to win back the confidence of the people, based on suggestions from you and from Party functionaries at various levels.

Our immediate task is to gear up for the electoral battle in the States of Maharashtra, Bihar, Haryana, Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh, which will elect new Assemblies within the next few months. I should also add Uttar Pradesh to this list, because, looking at the situation there, elections might be held before schedule. All these Assembly elections are very important for us.

We are meeting in Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra. I would like all of you to join me in congratulating the Maharashtra unit for performing well in the Lok Sabha elections, belying many forecasts. All of us here hope that the BJP, together with our time-tested ally, Shiv Sena, will be able to drive out of power the unholy alliance of the Congress and the NCP. The incumbent government has become a byword for corruption, non-performance and internal bickering. The people of Maharashtra are in a mood for change.

The people of Bihar are also eagerly awaiting freedom from the Jungle Raj of the RJD-Congress-Communists alliance. Our colleagues in the Bihar unit should prepare a meticulous strategy for ending its misrule, by learning the right lessons from the recent Lok Sabha elections.

For the BJP, it is very important to win a renewed mandate in Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh. I should add here that we have the opportunity to perform better in Haryana.

No Question of being Apologetic about *Hindutva*

Friends, preparing for the coming Assembly elections is of course our priority in the immediate term. But, simultaneously, we have to address the other crucial tasks before the party.

The foremost task before the entire Party organization is to rededicate ourselves to our ideology and to idealism. We have to create awareness right from top to bottom that we are not an ordinary political party, but a party with a mission. We are also a part of a larger movement, inspired by the ideology of nationalism.

What this mission is, and what this movement is, is something that our functionaries and *karyakartas* must internalize fully. It must be reflected in our thinking, communication and conduct.

There is, once again, speculation in a section of the media that the BJP is going back to *Hindutva*. The question of going back to *Hindutva* does not arise, because we have never left it, nor will we ever leave it.

For us, *Hindutva* is not an electoral issue. Electoral issues usually change from one election to another. But that is not the case with *Hindutva*, which is a way of life. It is the soul of our Nation. Even the Supreme Court has affirmed that *Hindutva* is the basic identity of India.

The BJP has always believed that *Hindutva*, *Bharatiyata* and Indianness are synonymous. They are one and the same. Therefore, as far as the BJP is concerned, there is no question of being apologetic about *Hindutva*. Indeed, we are proud of our civilization, our philosophy, and our cultural heritage.

I would also like to make one more thing clear. There is no question of giving up our efforts to reach out to all sections of Indian society, including the minorities. We never consider the minorities differently in our political work. Minorities are an integral part of our Nation. Our motto in this regard will continue to be: "Justice for all, appeasement of none".

Our Party will maintain good relations with all nationalist organizations working for the cause of nation-building.

Our commitment to *Vikas* will continue

Friends, there is some talk in media and political circles that, after the electoral setback we have suffered, the BJP would give

up its focus on *Vikas* (development), which we had made an important plank in our election campaign. I wish to make it absolutely clear that this will not be so. The BJP has twin commitments: Cultural Nationalism and Development. Indeed, the two are inter-related. Without our country's all-round and accelerated development, we cannot realize our dream of a resurgent India, capable of regaining and surpassing her past glory. We continue to believe that India has the potential, and all the needed resources, to emerge as a strong economic power and a Developed Nation in a short time. Therefore, "Development, Faster Development, and Equitable Development" will continue to be our *mantra*.

We are proud of the many path-breaking development initiatives of the Vajpayee government in infrastructure as well as in various social sectors. The BJP's policies and programmes will continue to highlight the urgency and imperative need for poverty alleviation, employment opportunities for all, removal of regional disparities, bridging of the rural-urban divide through innovative approaches such as PURA (Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas), urban renewal leading to improvement in the living conditions of slum dwellers, women's empowerment, and speedy development of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and all other weaker sections of society. We firmly hold that even the last man must benefit from, and must have a feeling of, involvement in the nation's integrated development. This is what we mean by '*Antyodaya*', and it will remain our guiding principle. I would like all our *karyakartas* to give overriding importance to all these development-related issues in their political and practical activities.

Expand BJP's work among Kisans and Rural Poor

Friends, we have to regain the confidence of the people by expanding and intensifying our activities in different sections of society, and also by effectively championing the causes of those sections of society in which we still have a narrow base.

In this context, I want to make a special mention of the need to expand our Party's work among farmers, farm workers, artisans, other sections of the rural poor, and the unorganized urban poor.

We have seen from our experience so far that whenever we have taken up farmers' issues in a sustained manner, wherever our Party has established active units in rural areas, and wherever our Party functionaries have toured rural areas on a regular basis, the rural people have supported the BJP in a heartening manner.

Our Kisan Morcha has a major responsibility in this regard. At the same time, it is not the responsibility of the functionaries of the Kisan Morcha alone. The entire Party organization has to expand its rural and kisan focus. Our activists should talk the language of the kisan, effectively articulate their problems and concerns, and establish an emotional bond with the farming community.

Organisation-Building: Back to Basics

Dear Colleagues, I would now like to share a few thoughts on expanding and energizing our Party organization. Our Party's organizational philosophy can be encapsulated in one simple phrase: "**Back to the Basics**".

First of all, as in the days of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and in the early years of Bharatiya Janata Party, our functionaries and main *karyakartas* must devote the main part of their time for party work for touring in their respective area of work, interacting with party workers, reaching out to the people, conceptualizing, planning and executing mass programmes. They should set standards in every sphere of work. It is important that each one of us is able to inspire the people with our idealism and our ideology.

From primary level right to the top rungs of the party, we should strengthen our old system of regular meetings, systematic planning, division of work and responsibilities, collective review and stock-taking, course correction and going forward to take up future tasks. This is how Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay used to guide us, and this is the path that Shri Atalji, Shri Advaniji, Late Kushabhau Thakreji and other old timers followed in organization-building.

In this respect, again, we have to go back to the basics. The virus of individualism has to be got rid off. **Each one of us must realize that we are what we are because of the party. It is the party consciousness, party personality and party identity with**

which we should align our own individual consciousness, individual personality and individual identity.

This is what we mean by “**Nation First, Party Next, Self Last**”.

I mentioned that we should take up people’s issues and problems as a key part of our strategy to energize our party. This is yet another area where our thrust on back to the basics becomes very relevant. I sometimes think that our party has become too election-oriented. By this, I mean that our workers become active mostly when elections are round the corner. At other times there is not much activity in some party units, especially at lower levels. This is not the sign of a lively and dynamic political organization.

We have to improve the state of the organization at all the levels. The top must take the lead in showing the way to party units down the line. For this, one of the first tasks is to continue live contact with our *karyakartas*.

Learning from Deendayalji

An ideal political worker and leader is one who thinks about the party and also works for the party 24/7 - 24/7/365, barring of course the time needed for rest and minimal personal and family engagements. Pandit Deendayalji Upadhyay used to say about the ideal *karyakarta* - “*Sab se bhagyashali woh hai jo satat karyarat hai*”. (He is most fortunate who is always engaged in work.)

Some people might wonder where is the work that can engage our time and energy always. It is necessary to remind them, and to remind ourselves that it is small but consistently carried out work that makes a big difference. For example, preparation of voters’ slips, their verification, distribution, contacting every voter at their residence, and getting their feedback. This may sound a small and trivial job. But we have seen its importance in the recent Parliamentary elections. Our workers’ failure in certain areas to attend to these basic tasks resulted in many missing names in voters’ lists and low turnout of our supporters, which contributed to electoral setbacks in several constituencies.

We'll Introduce a New System of Accountability

Friends, of late we are seeing a tendency wherein many want to be an office-bearer or a member of the National or State Executive or have some post or the other. But how many persons can we accommodate? Also, “accommodating” is not the principle that we can follow in organization building. Therefore, it is important for us to once again create a culture within the Party, whereby everyone performs the assignment given to him or to her, and makes best efforts to excel in that assignment.

In this context, I would like to inform members of the National Executive that we will soon establish a system of accountability to ensure that all of us perform the duty cast on us and further the cause of the Party.

Just as our party *karyakartas* should reach out to the last man, it is necessary for our leaders and functionaries to reach out to the last *karyakarta*. One of the main complaints that we receive from the gross-roots is about the insufficient and irregular interaction between the leaders and cadres. Our cadres are enthusiastic and dedicated. I have no doubt that regular interaction with them combined with regular training and orientation, we will be able to spot a large number of promising and capable young *karyakartas* who will be our future leaders.

Need to develop Young Leaders

Friends, I cannot overemphasise the need to develop a new layer of young leaders of the party all across the country. As we all know, an overwhelming section of India's population today is young - below 35 years of age. The BJP is proud that we have a set of young and capable leaders. Many of them are the products of the students' movement or the struggle against the emergency rule in the 1970s. We have to now make a special plan to systematically identify, develop and groom dedicated *karyakartas* from every section of our diverse society, who have the potential to emerge as the future leaders of the party at every level.

We should conduct monthly orientation classes for our *karyakartas*, in which they are exposed to a wide range of inspirational, educational and skill development training activities. For this reason, we have decided to raise the level of the training

activity in our party from that of a Cell to a full-fledged department on par with the six morchas.

I have directed Prof. Bal Apte to prepare a detailed proposal in this regard within two months. In course of time I would like this activity to develop an institutional structure for itself in the form of party school. I am happy to inform Members of the National Executive that the party is setting up a training institute in memory of Late Kushabhau Thakre in Bhopal. We already have the Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini in Mumbai.

Fight Casteism and Sectarianism by Strengthening the National Outlook

Dear colleagues, I shall conclude my opening remarks by touching upon a socio-political phenomenon that is bothering me a lot these days. This phenomenon was especially evident in the recent parliamentary elections. I am referring here to the rise of caste and sectarian feelings whose appeal in Indian politics is growing. Our party is not as much affected by this tendency as some others. Nevertheless, it is sad to see that this tendency is beginning to surface in our party at different levels.

I realize that it is a complex phenomenon. We must strive to have a proper balance in responding to the genuine aspirations of various social groups, especially the marginalized sections. However, the BJP is of the firm opinion that caste-based politics is not good for democracy, nor is it in the national interest. We have seen how caste-based parties and sectarian forces have been unable to promote the genuine needs of even their own sectional constituencies. Instead, they have been used for the promotion of individual leaders, their families and vested interests.

As I said, this is a complex issue. It needs to be properly studied. Our response to this has to be formulated and calibrated on the basis of our primary commitment to national unity and social harmony. However, one thing is clear. As a nationalist and national party, the responsibility has now come on the BJP to strengthen the national outlook in society and polity, and to fight casteist, communal and sectarian forces. We must reorient politics in our country in the direction of the pursuit of the larger national and social good, as per the guidance of our rishis and saints: "*Sarve*

Janah Sukhino Bhavantu” and “Bahujan Hitaya, Bahujan Sukhaya”.

Friends and colleagues, we are meeting in Mumbai against the backdrop of the next round of Assembly elections. The BJP continues to enjoy enormous goodwill and support in vast sections of Indian society. We will build on this goodwill and support with our policies and programmes in the coming months.

May the Mumbai meet announce to the entire country – loud enough even for our opponents to hear – that we will regain people’s confidence. WE WILL COME BACK. I have no doubt about it. It is with this determination that we have come to Mumbai and with the same determination we will go back from Mumbai after three days of fruitful deliberations.

**Thank you!
Vande Mataram!!**



National Executive

Indore

4 April, 2003

Friends,

It is my pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to all the Members of the National Executive, which is meeting at the confluence of historical achievements of NDA Government and significant challenges ahead for the BJP. The bouquet of achievements includes the completion of five years in office at a stretch by the NDA Government led by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Our Government has made a significant contribution to all round progress of the country by imparting the much-required political stability and laying concrete foundations for launching the country on course to realize its full potential. The challenges for the BJP centre around the crucial elections ahead. We have to take up necessary course corrections to enable the Party to come out with flying colours.

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has acquired the distinction of being the first non-Congress Prime Minister for five years at a stretch and NDA under his leadership the first non-Congress political formation to do so. This is significant for various reasons. It has thoroughly exposed two myths propagated by the Congress party: One, that coalition governance at the Centre cannot be stable; and two, that the BJP cannot provide proper leadership to a multi-party coalition and the supporting parties in the NDA cannot rally behind the BJP for long. It is a moment of glory and joy for all of us in the BJP. Our party has played an effective role in providing political stability in the backdrop of crumbling of several Governments at the Centre in quick succession raising serious doubts about the political stability in the country.

We must recall the backdrop and the circumstances in which

we came to power at the Centre. Erosion in the economy, a saga of scarcities, the growing monster of terrorism, derailed reforms programme, governance without focus, general directionless in matters of state and polity were the hallmark of the legacy given to us when we took over the reigns in 1998. Above all, there was a big question mark about the ability of NDA to survive as a cohesive political formation. It is a matter of great satisfaction that we have been able to bring about a radical change in the depressing scenario and position the country as a confident, capable, cohesive entity yearning to get its due place at the beginning of the 21st century. We can now proudly proclaim that there are no more long and unwinding queues, no waiting lists, no black market and no shortages whether it is for a phone, LPG connection, milk, sugar, food grains, cement etc.

Before I proceed further towards directing your attention to the issues and challenges staring at our party I would like to place on record as the President of BJP my deep appreciation and gratitude to our Prime Minister and beloved leader Shri Vajpayeeji for his sagacious and statesmanly leadership under which the NDA flourished like a blooming flower.

This meeting of the National Executive comes in the wake of four important political events the implications of which all of us must be fully aware of.

Gains in Jammu & Kashmir in peril

The recent killing of 24 Kashmiri Pandits has shocked the nation once again. Even as the countrymen were drawing immense satisfaction from the peaceful and successful conduct of elections to the State Legislative Assembly which was also acknowledged by the international public opinion, the gruesome killing of innocent people has raised serious doubts about the policy being followed by the PDP Government of which the Congress party is a major partner. The 'healing touch' policy met with its nemesis sooner than expected. Who needs the healing touch? Isn't it the bereaved families of the Armed Forces and Security personnel and the large number of innocents who were massacred that deserved it more than the militants who are being addressed by this policy?

Militancy by the local elements has significantly come down in the recent years though the cross-border terrorism was continuing to manifest itself. When the situation was apparently improving the

Special Action Group was disbanded. Army and the Paramilitary Forces, who have been sacrificing a great deal, have been made the focus of misguided criticism which is threatening to demoralize them. It is being increasingly asked if this is a policy of 'reciprocity' being adopted by the PDP Government. A Legislator has been shot dead, Abdul Majid Dar was killed and Kashmiri Pandits are again becoming the objects of gruesome killing. Fear psychosis is being sought to be perpetrated again. This is a matter of serious concern for us.

In the unsavoury unfolding of events under the PDP role, what is particularly worrisome is the role of the Congress Party. The Congress which is supposed to be guided by a degree of enlightened national responsibility is unfortunately becoming a party to squandering away of the gains of successful conduct of elections in the State. The manner and the turn out in the elections were an eloquent testimony to the demand the aspirations of the people of the State for reconstruction of the economy of the State and through it, their own lives for a better future marking a break from the past. However, the short-sighted approach of the Congress is negating the will and aspirations of the people of the State. It is time the Congress party reviewed its Kashmir policy failing which they would be doing a great disservice to the people of Jammu & Kashmir and also of the State. I would like to warn the Congress party that it would be held accountable for the consequences of the deteriorating situation in Jammu & Kashmir.

Iraq War

The US war on Iraq and its consequences are agitating the minds of the people. The NDA Government and the country as such have made it clear that the war has no justification. Of particular concern is the marginalisation of United Nations Organisation in the whole course of events. The country's foreign policy is always guided by national interest. On such a matter of international ramification, the Government has made its position clear. The war must be brought to an end at the earliest. The United Nations shall reassert itself and do the needful to prevent any further loss of lives of civilians by bringing the war to an end.

Denigration of the Heroes of Independence

The Congress party and their new-found allies have sought to create an unnecessary controversy over the unveiling of the portrait

of Veer Savarkar in the Central Hall of Parliament. This is nothing but a manifestation of the political philosophy and approach of pseudo-secularists who were always guided by vote bank politics. Veer Savarkar besides being a revolutionary freedom fighter was also a poet, historian and social reformer. It is disgusting that such a person of eminence is being sought to be projected in a poor light for short-term political considerations.

Our country's struggle for independence was a combination of different contrasting and complimentary movements. It was a coalition of different philosophies and approaches, but guided by the common goal of liberating the motherland from the yoke of foreign rule. The freedom movement had thrown up several leaders and heroes who made stellar sacrifices. We should not allow our political differences to denigrate any of them. Every freedom fighter has to be revered. To present to the future generations of our country only one sided account of the great freedom struggle would amount to denigrating the saga of struggle and sacrifice. The unveiling of Veer Savarkar's portrait has to be seen in this context. The ill-considered actions of Congress and other opposition parties in making a hue and cry over the portrait of Veer Savarkar deserves to be strongly condemned.

Himachal Pradesh and the road ahead

We are going to face elections for four State Legislative Assemblies to be followed by the General Elections to the Lok Sabha in the next 15 months. Any election is a major challenge for any political party. To approach the coming electoral challenge in a meaningful manner we have to draw lessons from the Himachal Pradesh elections and prepare for the future.

I would like to make it clear that we have not lost in Himachal Pradesh on merits. In spite of good performance by the BJP Government in the State, we have failed in reaping electoral dividends. In my view this is a classic case for our party to learn right lessons so that we don't lose out by default any more. The standards of discipline in the Himachal Unit led the party down badly. Our loss in Himachal Pradesh was sought to be interpreted by our adversaries as a defeat of *Hindutva*. I can only say that whoever feels so is living in fools' paradise. *Hindutva* for us is not an electoral issue to be negotiated in political battle fields. Cultural nationalism is our life-line and *Hindutva* is the soul of India.

Though we lost in Himachal, the party has gained significant ground in the North-East. BJP's penetration in recent Assembly elections in Nagaland has come as a proof of our party reaching new horizons among new regions and social groups. The outright rejection of Congress in Nagaland has come as the much deserved slap for the pseudo-secularists. Our success in Nagaland is also an acknowledgement of the people's welcoming response to the peace initiatives launched in earnestness by the Vajpayee Government. I compliment the people of Nagaland, the leaders and workers of our State Party Unit for the new message they put out.

Challenges and Correctives

Our journey from the past into the future have to be marked by clear introspection and concrete correctives. Obviously, discipline should be at the top of the agenda. Party has to take firm initiatives to curb indiscipline. We shall always remind ourselves that while performance of the Government provides the right launching pad to pluck the fruits, it is the discipline of the leaders and workers that makes the difference.

I would like to invite the attention of all the leaders and workers to the Delhi Pledge of August 3, 2002. Strict adherence to the Pledge only would help us walk on the path of dedication, discipline, determination and dynamism. We must intervene with necessary correctives and in good time at all levels. I am sure the Executive will join me in pursuing strict adherence to the Code of Conduct set for ourselves. If the individuals do not mend their ways by themselves, Party will have to step in.

Favourable situation in four States going to the polls

We are going to plunge into election mode. The four States going for Assembly polls are ruled by our principal adversary, the Congress. I am sure the leaders and workers in these States have a thorough measure of the public mood in respective States. It is marked by disillusionment and disenchantment. The record of Congress Governments in these States is one of non-performance, misrule, inefficiency, corruption, atrocities on weaker sections and women, deteriorating law and order situation and to top it all the saga of failed promises. It is shocking to hear reports of people suffering from hunger despite the liberal assistance being extended by the NDA Government without any political discrimination for meeting

the drought and other adverse situations. These States are also lagging behind the national average in terms of critical parameters like literacy, health care, housing, self-help groups, connectivity and poverty.

A situation that is extremely conducive for the BJP is prevailing in the States and it is for the leaders and cadres of our party to properly channelise the people's anger and frustration. What is required is effective articulation of people's disillusionment with the Congress into resounding victories for the BJP. This in turn requires our State Units to put up a united fight. Being aware of their failures and the gravity of the situation, the Chief Ministers of these States have begun to resort to dirty tricks to divert the attention of the people. Gimmicks like appointment of Deputy Chief Ministers and resorting to the so-called soft *Hindutva* line, etc., are being resorted to. The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister went to the extent of suggesting a ban on cow slaughter, though the Congress high command is still struggling in confusion on this issue. The Congress stooped to the lowest by resorting to malign even the Prime Minister by releasing some pamphlets. They had to subsequently disown the campaign under public outrage against such dirty tricks.

The worse is that the Madhya Pradesh Government has planned the greatest electoral scam ever by resorting to scientific rigging through manipulation of voter lists. When it became public the State Government had no defence and the Chief Minister tried to put up a meek one without any success. The State Government is going to go to any extent to protect the officials concerned, because these officials could not have committed such gross irregularities without specific instructions from their political leaders. I wish to ask the Congress party's national leadership: "Why are you silent about this electoral scam?" I also urge our colleagues in the Party's State unit to intensify the mass campaign against the Chief Minister and take it to its logical end.

The Rajasthan Government is a classic case of how an ineffective State Government can nullify the advantages of liberal assistance from the Central Government. No Central Government has ever offered so much of assistance to a State Government as the NDA Government did in the case of Rajasthan to mitigate the adverse consequences of drought. There are reports of hunger-related deaths and large scale migration of people.

The Congress party advertises Chhattisgarh as a model State

led by an ideal Chief Minister. As with most of its other claims, the truth is quite the opposite. The Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh has perfected the politics of defection, deception and manipulation. Misuse of the governmental machinery for partisan political gains has become the norm. Developmental activities have been totally neglected. There is intense disenchantment within the Congress party over Chief Minister's the style of functioning. The spectacular response to the *Kisan* Rally organized by the BJP recently is proof that the people are waiting to teach the ruling party a lesson in the coming Assembly elections.

The record of the Congress government in Delhi is one of broken promises and all-round failure. The problems of power and water scarcity have become worse than before. Whatever improvement in civic amenities one sees in the national capital, such as the inauguration of Phase 1 of Metro Rail project, is due to the focused attention and assistance provided by the Centre.

This is only an illustrative account of the hopeless state of affairs in the States going to the polls towards the end of this year. In this context our party units have to mount an aggressive campaign. I am happy with the preparations made so far in the four States. We now have to move on to a focused campaign. I would urge the State Units to draw up detailed programmes for laying bare the misrule in these States in the eyes of the public.

The battle in the four States has to be taken as a semi-final for the final onslaught for 300 Lok Sabha seats for our party in the General Elections next year. This is possible given our record of achievements and the directionless ways among the Opposition parties.

Congress and the great betrayal

Being aware of the impending defeat in the elections, the Congress party has now suddenly remembered 'the poor'. Having extended a propping hand to the rich for all the 47 years of their rule at the center, they now realize the virtue of being with the poor. The saga of long Congress rule is nothing but a 'great betrayal'. Having been let down very badly all these years, the poor are not willing to be cheated once again by the Congress. *Abhee tak ameer ke saath; Chunaav ke mode pe gareeb ko haath; Chunaav ke baad phir se vishwaasghaat* – this has been the Congress party's tract record vis-à-vis the poor. The Congress leaders should at least now realize that the people of country are wise enough to see through their games. The Congress

rule is singularly responsible for regional disparities, unemployment, poverty, terrorism and in nutshell for all the ills plaguing our nation. I am happy that Congress has publicly acknowledged that they did not do enough for the poor during their long rule when they were pre-occupied with the rich. The Congress also seems to have forgotten their great journey on the path of corruption. The credit for institutionalization of corruption entirely goes to Congress. Like the demon citing Vedic verses the Congress is now shedding crocodile tears when the BJP and NDA are fighting corruption in all its forms and manifestations.

The conduct of opposition in the Parliament during the last five years is a matter of serious concern for any genuine votary of democracy. They have no courage to face the truth and so scuttle the debates by disrupting the Parliament. They have always resorted to “spit and run” policy. This is best illustrated by their imaginary allegations about the so-called “coffin” scam. They did not mind lowering the prestige of the Parliament. Why do they do so? It is because they are not able to digest the fact of the BJP being able to effectively lead the largest ever coalition in the country for so long. The Opposition has no common agenda. They pose for photos one day and start opposing each other the next day. They unite by the evening and part by the morning. They fight against each other in Tripura, West Bengal and Kerala and pretend to be together in Delhi.

The Opposition is also doing a great disservice to the nation by continuing with their double standards and negativism on issues of larger national concern. Kashmir, Kargil, terrorism, POTA, infiltration, country’s security streamlining school curriculum, religious conversions, Godhra and the unfortunate happenings in its aftermath, and reforms are some of the many issues that the Opposition do not mind compromising with the national interest for political gains. It pains me to hear from some of the political commentators that the country never had such an Opposition marked by lack of direction. They also say that it is good for the BJP. On this I don’t agree with them because we believe that democracy needs an effective and vibrant opposition. I dare the Congress to point out one issue on which it has adopted a constructive approach in the national interest.

The NDA Government has done well so far on several counts. The Party is happy that the Government has positively responded to our suggestion on the issue of fertilizer subsidy. I compliment the

Finance Minister Shri Jaswant Singh for his response in this regard. I also appreciate the Government for responding in an exemplary manner in respect of drought management in several States. I, however, feel that there is a need for clear directions to the banks on the issue of interest waiver and better monitoring of drought relief operations. The Party suggests the Government to –

- Prepare a Special Package for Kashmiri Pandits covering housing, employment, self-employment, health-care and other social security needs.
- Scrap IMDT Act as it failed to serve any useful purpose.
- Facilitate national legislation against cow slaughter to protect cow and its progeny, which are a part of the valuable national wealth.
- Initiate national debate on the need for expeditious population control programmes based on incentives and disincentives.
- Accord due recognition and status to all Indian languages.

During the remaining 15 months the Government shall focus more on speedy implementation of various on-going developmental and welfare programmes through effective monitoring and constant review. While the Government would do its best, it is for the leaders and workers of the party to relate with the people effectively by becoming symbols and hopes of their aspirations. I call upon the Legislators of the BJP and also of the NDA partners and supporting parties to be on constant alert to ensure that the gains of various pro-people programmes reached the masses and be in dialogue with the people about our concern for them. The Party needs to focus its attention on sustained campaign on the following issues:

- Need for effective action on terrorism by state governments.
- Need for Three-D Formula on infiltration i.e. Detection, Deletion and Deportation.
- NCERT Curriculum.
- Need for Anti-Conversion Law in all states.
- Need for ban on cow slaughter.
- Effective measures for population control.

Major challenges lie ahead. We shall meet them effectively and unitedly.

Let us move on with confidence.

Victory is ours and the future is ours.



National Executive

Raipur

18-20 July, 2003

“The BJP has UNITY. The BJP has CLARITY. And the people are willing to give the BJP and our allies a bigger OPPORTUNITY.”

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this meeting of the Party’s National Executive in Raipur. The last meeting of the National Executive was held in Indore in May. The journey from Indore to Raipur has been short, both in time and space. Yet, politically, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Government of the National Democratic Alliance, under the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has traversed a long distance in these three months.

Chintan Baithak, A Direction-setting Event

As far as the BJP is concerned, the most important development in this period was the holding of the four-day *Chintan Baithak* at Rambhau Mhalgi Probodhini’s campus near Mumbai. We have an old tradition of holding such brainstorming sessions in an informal atmosphere from time to time. I have the pleasure and satisfaction of reporting to the National Executive that the *Chintan Baithak* was highly productive and useful from every consideration.

We had a free and frank discussion, within a structured format, on all the major issues before the Party and the Government. We conducted an in-depth review of the political situation, both at the national level and in individual States. We discussed the performance of various developmental and welfare initiatives of the Government, and agreed on a new set of initiatives for the benefit of the people. I am pleased to note that the Government has already started to act on some of these suggestions from the Party.

Participants in the *Chintan Baithak* expressed satisfaction that the interaction between the BJP and other nationalist organizations has been intensified and become more regular in recent times.

The chief outcome of the *Chintan Baithak* was that it helped sharpen our focus on the two major electoral battles ahead: Operation 2003 and Mission 2004. We came out with a strengthened resolve to achieve resounding victory in the Assembly elections in five States scheduled to be held later this year; and follow it up with a renewed and bigger mandate in the Parliamentary elections, which are slated for the latter half of next year.

Interaction between Party and Government

Dear colleagues, you will recall that in the meetings of the National Executive in the initial years of the NDA Government many members used to feel for the need to have greater interaction between the Government and the party. I am happy to say with considerable degree of satisfaction that the level of interaction between the Government and the party has exceeded my own expectation. I am grateful to the Prime Minister for responding positively whenever required to address the issues raised by the party on the basis of the feedback that we receive from the grass roots. Many of our suggestions and ideas are being quickly accepted and even implemented. In this context, I must inform you about the incredible speed with which some of the suggestions made at the *Chintan Baithak* have been already implemented. Even earlier, the Finance Minister and other Ministers have been very responsive to our suggestions on matters such as Kelkar Committee report, VAT, problems of the powerloom sector, small scale sector, telephone rentals, Employees Provident Fund – just to name a few.

I must here also express my gratitude to Shri Advaniji for giving his time and guidance whenever we seek it, thereby acting as the main link between the Government and the party.

I am also happy that the Ministers in the Government have increased their involvement in party's activities by coming to the party office regularly, taking up party's programmes in different parts of the country and also interacting with party workers. This has helped the Ministers to receive the feedback from the party workers and also to make them aware of the many pro-people initiatives in their own Ministries and in other Ministries.

The past one year has also seen greater interaction between the party functionaries and workers through novel initiatives such as *Sahyog*. Based on this positive experience, I would like to propose to all the State Units to follow this initiative at their level.

Organisational Elections

Please recall our resolve to complete organizational elections by the end of this year at all levels. I am happy to share with you the progress made so far and I am hopeful that the entire process shall be completed as per schedule.

Proud Record of the Government's Achievements and Initiatives

As far as the NDA Government is concerned, the period since the Indore meeting of the National Executive is marked by big achievements – both on the domestic and external fronts. First of all, on behalf of the Party I wish to warmly congratulate our Prime Minister on his highly successful visits, first to Germany, Russia and France and then to China. At Evian in France, he represented India, for the very first time, at the summit of the G-8 nations and effectively put forward the case of developing countries for achieving sustainable and equitable global development. At both Evian and St. Petersburg in Russia, his fruitful meetings with several world leaders not only strengthened our bilateral relations, but also helped in further widening international support for India's stand on Kashmir, cross-border terrorism and other issues.

The Prime Minister's visit to China was pathbreaking in many ways. It helped in inaugurating what promises to be a new and mutually beneficial relationship between two of the largest and fastest-developing nations in the world today. The BJP hopes that the new framework for talks on the vexed border dispute between our two countries, which has been agreed to in Beijing, would yield positive results in the near future. The agreement on trade and economic cooperation also bodes well for the economies of our two countries, given the fact that trade between India and China is growing at an astonishing speed.

The Prime Minister's renewed peace initiative with Pakistan has been welcomed and appreciated around the world. It has established India's earnestness and the Prime Minister's commitment to achieving normalization of relations with Pakistan. However, the world community also realizes that the

onus is now on Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism and completely dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism that has been built over the years on its soil. This point was strongly argued by Deputy Prime Minister Shri LK Advani, during his recent visit to USA and UK.

In this context, we in the BJP cannot but express our deep dissatisfaction over the lack of a firm and positive response from Pakistan to the Prime Minister's peace initiative. The pronouncements of Pakistan's President, General Pervez Musharraf, suggest that he is unwilling to change Islamabad's traditional anti-India agenda. It is also obvious that General Musharraf is engaged in a serious battle with the forces of democracy in his own country. There seems to be a growing opinion within Pakistani society in favour of resolving all issues with India through bilateral talks. Two of its former Prime Ministers, both of whom are now in exile, have openly expressed this opinion. However, this view has not yet crystallized into a clear position in Pakistan's political establishment, which has locked horns with the ruling military establishment on the question of the legitimacy of General Musharraf's authority. The situation is fluid and the outcome of this battle is as yet uncertain. Therefore, the Government has rightly decided to tread very cautiously in its efforts to improve India's relations with Pakistan. This stand, I must state here, has won the support and appreciation of our people. Even on the issue of sending troops to Iraq, the Government has acted as per the national interest.

Pro-poor Thrust to the Government's Policies and Programmes

On the domestic front, the period since the last meeting of the National Executive has been one of several new initiatives and landmark achievements by the NDA Government. I wish to congratulate the Finance Minister, Shri Jaswant Singh, on the launch of two important social security initiatives – the *Varishtha* Pension Bima Yojana for senior citizens with an assured annual interest rate of 9% and the Universal Health Insurance Scheme, which is a highly attractive initiative for reaching basic healthcare to the poor. Both are first initiatives of their kind, further reinforcing the Vajpayee Government's reputation as a caring and compassionate government.

Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, has further strengthened this reputation by launching the ambitious *Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana*. Under one of its components, the Government has decided to set up as many as six super-specialty hospitals on the pattern of AIIMS in different regions of the country. The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the first such hospital in Bhubaneswar two days ago. I would also like to compliment the Minister of Labour, Shri Sahib Singh Varma for the bold initiative taken in assuring 9% interest on EPF. This step re-inforced the Government's commitment towards the welfare of the working class. This would not have been possible but for the support extended by the Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

I urge our Party workers to actively popularize these initiatives. In the case of the Universal Health Insurance Scheme, they should, either directly or through dedicated NGOs, also work as intermediaries and mobilize poor families' participation in the scheme.

Suggestions for Some New Initiatives

Agricultural Credit - Lower Interests for the Farmers

The timely arrival of the monsoon in many parts of the country has brightened the prospects of a good harvest this year. I suggest that the Government, taking note of the good rains, give a call to farmers to do their very best to achieve at least a 10% increase in food production this year. This is entirely possible, provided we launch a concerted and multi-dimensional effort, involving the Centre, State Governments, banks and credit agencies, and organizations engaged in distribution of seeds, fertilizers, etc. However, the success of this effort depends to some extent on mitigating the critical problems affecting Indian agriculture. High cost of agricultural credit is one of them. The poor health of rural credit societies is another. I urge the Finance and Agriculture Ministers to have these matters examined and come up with workable solutions soon. I would like to compliment the Finance Minister for announcing 9% rate of interest on farm loans to farmers. The interest charged on the loans to purchase agriculture implements like tractors should also be reduced considerably. The BJP would like the Finance ministry to consider providing similar interest rates on loans taken by farmers for desilting of agricultural

wells, filter points, motors and pump sets, strengthening and upgradation of bunds of agricultural lands.

Employment Opportunities

A major challenge before the Nation is to create productive employment and self-employment opportunities for all able-bodied citizens, especially the youth. Thanks to the Government's various schemes, programmes and policies, employment and self-employment opportunities have indeed increased in recent years. Nevertheless, there is a big need, and an equally big scope, for further enhancing these opportunities. In my view, KVIC and the small-scale sector can deliver a lot more in this regard, provided they receive more resources and greater attention. The Planning Commission has recently presented two excellent reports to the Prime Minister on the development of Bio-Fuels (ethanol, bio-diesel and others) and Bamboo. Both have a tremendous potential to create employment opportunities, raise tens of lakhs of artisans and farmers above the poverty line, achieve import substitution worth tens of thousands of crores and also earn considerable foreign exchange. The party would like the Government to quickly and effectively implement the recommendations of these two reports.

Setting up of Various Commissions

At the *Chintan Baithak*, there was an unanimous view that the Government should set up a National Judicial Commission and a separate Development Commission for Nomadic Tribes. There was a suggestion for review of the functioning of the various Commissions and Development and Finance Corporations. I would like the Government to act fast on these issues.

I would also urge upon the Government to set up a Commission to take care of the problems of the disabled people. The party has also recommended to the Government the need to set up a commission to study the problems of economically backward classes among the so-called forward communities and the feasibility of providing reservation to these sections. I hope the Government takes an early decision on these issues.

The Party urges the Government to scrap the IMDT Act at the earliest, so that the glaring legal and administrative loopholes in checking infiltration from Bangladesh can be plugged. In this meeting of the National Executive, we are going

to discuss a draft resolution on Women's Reservation in Parliament and State Legislatures. Therefore, I shall limit my comments on this subject only to saying that the BJP is committed to Women's Reservation and would like to build consensus on a new and workable set of ideas on women's political empowerment.

Massive Educative Campaign - *Gaon Gaon Chalo, Ghar-Ghar Chalo*

Our Government has launched many programmes and projects in the past five years that are unprecedented in nature, unmatched in their scope and impact. Yet, it seems to me that our Party supporters are not well informed about these initiatives. Our supporters should take pride in the performance of the Government and communicate it to the people with conviction and confidence. I suggest that the party must go for a nationwide massive campaign to highlight the achievements and our local units shall visit every village and every house during the course of this year. This can be called *Gaon Gaon Chalo, Ghar Ghar Chalo Abhiyan*. In this context, I wish to emphasise that the Government too should further strengthen its communication to the people so that they can be partners in the nation's development.

Feel Good Factor in the Country

Dear Colleagues, the situation in the country can be summed up in just one sentence: THERE IS A FEEL GOOD FACTOR. This is because the people have seen, tested and judged the performance of the NDA Government under Shri Atalji's leadership. As I observed in Indore, too, there is perhaps no precedent for a Prime Minister to remain as popular as Shri Atalji is after five years in the saddle. This gives the confidence that, under his continued leadership, the BJP along with our allies will win a renewed and bigger mandate as and when Parliamentary elections are held.

Not only are the people positively inclined towards the Government, but they are also strongly disinclined towards the Opposition. There is division and despondency in the Opposition ranks. The starkest contrast between the BJP and the Congress is in the area of leadership. We have a leader in Shri Atalji, who is not only the leader of the BJP, not only the leader of the NDA, but also the leader of the entire Nation. On the other hand, all

that the Congress can do is to take shelter under the Dynasty.

Drained of all vigour and originality in thought and action, the Congress Party has taken to imitating the BJP. If we had a *Chintan Baithak*, they had a *Manthan Shibir*. We adopted the strategy of alliance politics way back in 1996. Now the Congress has finally been jolted into accepting the ground realities of Indian politics, but its readiness to take allies has so far found few takers. It is highly unlikely that the Congress will find many allies even among the other parties for whom the BJP is anathema. For instance, I challenge the communist parties to declare that they would form a pre-poll alliance with the Congress in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura.

We are ready for a Debate with the Congress on Development

The Congress has no issue left in its armour to take on the Government, hence it has fallen back upon the worn out bogey of communalism. I challenge the Congress leadership to counter us on the plank of development. Let there be a debate on 47 years of Congress misrule versus 5 years of the NDA Government's pro-development rule. But the Congress knows that it cannot question our development record without cutting a sorry figure. They cannot countenance a contrast between our track record of social and economic justice for weaker sections and their track record.

We are ready for a Debate with the Congress on Secularism

Which is why, at its Shimla conclave, the Congress has once again taken out its rusted and blunted weapon of communalism, and called for the formation of an alliance of self-styled secular parties to defeat the BJP. I would like to tell our friends in the Congress Party that we are in the least bit worried by their shrill propaganda that the BJP is an anti-secular party. We are prepared for an open debate on secularism. But first, the Congress should answer a few uncomfortable questions and clarify its stand on a few issues:

⊞ Whether or not the Congress wants the Ayodhya issue to be resolved with the construction of Ram Temple at the *Janmasthan*;

⊞ Whether or not the Congress high command agrees with the assertion made by its Chief Minister in Madhya Pradesh that *Hindutva* is not a religious concept;

⊞ Whether or not the Congress high command thinks that

the advocacy of its Chief Minister in Chattisgarh for a Ram Katha Temple in his State is communal or secular;

▫ Whether or not the Congress high command agrees that its Chief Minister in Kerala was right in criticizing the adamancy and unreasonableness of the Muslim League.

I also suggest that those who criticize the BJP day in and day out to be “an enemy of secularism” should take the trouble of referring to the Prime Minister’s recent speech at the international conference in New Delhi on Dialogue Among Civilisations. In this conference, the Prime Minister affirmed that the Indian concept of secularism (understood as *Sarva Panth Samabhaav*) should be accepted by all countries in the world, so that tolerance and inter-faith cooperation become global ideals.

While explaining to the people about the developmental initiatives, educate them about important issues like Terrorism and POTA, NCERT syllabus, dangers of infiltration, scrapping of IMDT Act, need for anti-conversion laws, ban on Cow slaughter, inter linking of rivers, population control, and need for providing reservation for economically backward people.

Operation 2003 and Mission 2004

Friends, we are meeting in Chhattisgarh. It is our Government at the Centre that created this state, along with Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, with the aim of catalyzing development of the backward region. The Congress has ruled Chhattisgarh continuously for 10 years—eight years when it was a part of MP and two years thereafter. The performance of the Congress Govt. has gone from bad to worse. It has failed miserably on all fronts. Instead, in order to cover up its failures, the state’s Chief Minister has resorted to every kind of gimmick, including sitting for *dharna* in front of the PM’s residence in Delhi.

The Congress rules four of the five states going to the polls later this year. The Congress rule in these states has become synonymous with corruption, scandals, increasing atrocities on women and weaker sections, and neglect of people’s welfare. The people in all these states are completely fed-up with the Congress Party and want a change. The battle lines are being drawn. Our immediate objective is to succeed in Operation 2003 - that is, to unseat the Congress from power and a big win for BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh and Delhi. I congratulate the State

units in these four States for their devoted efforts to achieve this objective. I compliment the Central Ministers who have taken up specific responsibilities to participate in the campaign activities in these four States. Let there be teamwork and tireless work at all levels of the Party organization. There is a strong anti-incumbency mood among the people in all the four States. People want to support the BJP. Now it is up to us to convert this groundswell of support into a convincing and complete sweep in all the four States.

Simultaneously, I call upon Party workers, functionaries, Ministers, MPs, MLAs and leaders at all levels to gear up for Mission 2004. Be always on the move, reach out to the masses, explain our achievements and assert the soundness of our policies. I repeat what I said earlier, "Think progressively, Assert ideologically and Campaign aggressively". Here our objective is to reach as close to a clear majority for the BJP as possible and secure a two-thirds majority along with our allies. It is not an impossible goal. We can do it. We have UNITY. We have CLARITY. And the people are willing to give us a bigger OPPORTUNITY.

Hindutva is the soul of India. We are proud of it but it cannot be an election issue. Nor can *Hindutva* be projected as a narrow religious concept. We are committed to secularism but are opposed to pseudo-secularism and appeasement for garnering minority votes.

We are proud of our ideology. Do not hesitate to state our stand on any issue, but remember that we are leading a coalition government and there is no question of thrusting our agenda on any of our partners.

Corner the Congress from all corners. Do not allow the Congress to divert the peoples, attention from their past misrule and present failures. Emphasize the main points of our agenda – namely, National Security, National Unity, Good Governance and Development. Challenge the Congress to debate these issues with us. These shall be the main themes of our campaign.

We are strong on each of these issues and our opponents are weak. Compare 47 years of misrule of the Congress and five years of performance of the BJP led Government.

We should tell the people, "You gave absolute majority to Congress at all levels and you have seen what they have done on

development front. You have seen what they did to our national security. You have given us a limited mandate still you have five years of good governance before you. We need a stronger mandate to carry forward the agenda of making India a stronger and more developed nation. Hence the call for Mission 2004 and Vision - 2020 (*Shaktishali Bharat ke liye Shaktishali Bhajapa*).

Project the BJP as a Nation First party – pro-poor, pro-farmer, pro-rural, pro-youth and a party committed to India's all round development.

I would like this to be the main message of the meeting of the Party's National Executive in Raipur.

Thank you!
Vande Mataram!!

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National Council

New Delhi

03 August, 2002

At the outset I would like to convey my profound sense of gratitude to the Party leadership for entrusting me with the responsibility of leading the Bharatiya Janata Party, and to millions of my fellow workers for having accepted and endorsed this decision. All of you have wholeheartedly blessed me on my assumption of the office of our Party President.

I shall do my utmost to live up to the faith you have reposed in me. It shall be my sincere endeavour to expand our Party to new territorial horizons and new social frontiers and, simultaneously to consolidate the proud gains it has made so far. I would like to solemnly assure this august gathering that you will not find me wanting in this task.

PART I

My Humble Tributes to our past Presidents

With all humility, I would like to confess that I feel like a small man stepping into big shoes. Great leaders have headed our Party in the past-and here I refer to the BJP's journey since 1980 and also to our politico-ideological journey since 1951, when the Bharatiya Jana Sangh was founded. Today I bow before the sacred memory of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay.

Today, I cannot help recall the ringing words of Dr. Mookerjee at the founding conference of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh on 21 October 1951:

“I rise to welcome you all to this historic Convention which meets at a momentous period in the history of India. I am well aware of the fact that the task ahead of us is a difficult one. We have many obstacles to struggle against and have to face powerful opposition. What, however, must hold us together is an unflinching faith in the great cause that our Party claims to serve and a clear appreciation of the objectives we have set before us. I am confident that if we all proceed unitedly with undaunted courage and vigour, not deviating from the right path, keeping to service of the people and the advancement of the honour and dignity of our beloved motherland as the principal aim before us, we are bound ultimately to attain success.”

What unbounded confidence! What rock-like commitment!
And what supreme devotion to the cause of Mother India!

If Dr. Mookerjee could express such hope and confidence at a time when the Party was a mere seed, and when the Congress was a colossus, why shouldn't we have the same unflinching hope and confidence in ourselves, and the same uncompromising commitment when we have humbled the Congress?

Today I also express my gratitude to my illustrious predecessors. In Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, we have the oldest member, and the tallest leader of the Party. He was a founding member of the Jana Sangh, he was the founding President of the BJP, and now he is the leader of the one billion people of India, the most popular, the most beloved and, the most respected. Shri Ataiji is not just a person, he is a phenomenon. He occupies a very special place in my political life, and I shall come to that soon.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to Shri Lal Krishna Advani. He is the pillar of strength for our Party – and the strength he provides is ideological, political, and organizational and, above all, moral. In spite of all the growing responsibilities on him, he continues to assist the Party Organisation, always finding time to guide and groom younger leaders.

I would also like to thank Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, Shri Kushabhau Thakre, Shri Bangaru Laxman and Shri Jana

Krishnamurthy. I have learnt from each one of them and look forward to their continued guidance.

From an ordinary Party Worker to Party President

Today being a special day in my political life, I am filled with emotions and memories. When I look back, I feel amazed, excited, overwhelmed and humbled.

I was born in a farmer's family in a remote village far down in the South. In my student days, I used to paste posters and write slogans on the walls whenever our leaders Shri Atalji and Shri Advaniji toured our areas. Today, with the blessings of these two great leaders and with your support I have been entrusted with this big responsibility. I think this kind of an amazing journey from being an ordinary Party worker in a hamlet to leading the Party at the national level is perhaps possible only in the BJP. This is the strength of our Party. Indeed, it is one of the many reasons why we proudly say that ours is a Party with a Difference.

During my childhood, I used to frequent the RSS Shakhas to play kabaddi. Without my own knowing, the Sangh moulded my mind, infused patriotism and idealism in me. I was drawn by the magnetic personality of the Pracharak of the area, Shri Bhogadi Durga Prasad. This association brought about a radical change in my life.

My upbringing in the school of nationalism assumed an active dimension when I joined the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad. The ABVP perfected me as a disciplined worker and as a youth leader in people's movement. I can never forget the experiences of those foundation years.

Permit me to narrate an incident from my early days as an ABVP activist. While still a student of law, I had gone on vacation to a friend's village by the side of the Godavari river. We had a sumptuous lunch at his house and then decided to swim the river from one bank to the other. But as my stomach was heavy, I, halfway through the river, lost my confidence. My friends had gone ahead. I started shouting, afraid that I would get drowned. The thought that came to my mind at that moment, which I spoke out loudly to my friends, was: "Oh, my life is

coming to end without seeing Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji as the Prime Minister.”

Of course, some cattle breeders on the other side of the river came to my rescue and helped me swim to safety. But what I want to emphasise is that seeing Shri Atalji as the Prime Minister was the dream and wish of millions of people even in those days.

Subsequently, I invited JP to my university in Vishakhapatnam to address the youth. This inspired me to plunge into the JP movement. Like thousands of pro-democracy political workers, I was also jailed during the Emergency and spent 17 months in prison. This period of trial and hardship helped me in strengthening my determination and rousing my spirit of action to pursue our party's objectives.

Our Vision of India

Friends, a lot has changed in the political landscape in our country since the time I began my life in the party 25 years ago. But what has remained unchanged is our commitment to our party's ideology and ideals. Power for us was never an end in itself. We always viewed it as only a means to an end. That goal was, and continues to remain, India's all-round progressive transformation, to build an India that is strong, secure, self-confident, prosperous, cohesive and harmonious; an India that is free of hunger, poverty and other ills of underdevelopment; an egalitarian India that provides equal opportunities to all her citizens irrespective of their caste, religion, region or language; an India that rediscovers and surpasses her past glory in culture and arts; an India that begins to be better respected all over the world and plays her rightful role in the affairs of the world – in short, it is the goal of reconstruction of India as *Swarnim Bharat*.

Pandit Deendayalji describes this goal in a very inspiring way in his last lecture on Integral Humanism. This is the goal that I rededicate myself to, and I would like our party to rededicate itself to, today.

Generational Change: Blend of Experience and Youth

Many commentators have observed that there has been a generational change in our Party. This is both true and not true.

Yes, a set of relatively younger Party functionaries like me have been given important responsibilities. At the same time, we are fortunate in receiving continued guidance and assistance from Shri Atalji, Shri Advaniji and other experienced elders. Thus, our Party presents a good combination of experience and youthful dynamism, of wisdom and vigour.

I would like to assure the National Council that, although I am the President, I shall strictly follow the principle of teamwork and collective leadership. I do not believe in the 'follower' school of thinking. I have an abiding faith in the 'collegiate' school of working.

Road half-travelled, but many more miles to go

This meeting of our Party's National Council is taking place at a crucial time. The BJP, at the head of the National Democratic Alliance, has been in power at the Centre for over four years now. From our experience of governing the affairs of the country, we have certain lessons to learn so that we could go about providing more effective governance. Similarly, as a ruling party at the national level, there is much for us to learn for taking up necessary corrective measures. Any individual, institution or a political party should have the necessary honesty, ability and readiness to address shortcomings so that the journey ahead could be more focused and productive.

This is the right opportunity for all of us to discuss the issues before our Government and the Party, analyze the political landscape in which we are operating, and crystallize the action plan for the future. Our main task is to evaluate if the BJP as a ruling party and the BJP-led NDA Government have acquitted themselves well or not. In my view, on both these counts we have done well. However, it does not mean that there is no scope for improvement. The main focus of this meeting is to identify areas where we – as Party and as Government – can improve ourselves, so that we can better meet the expectations of the people.

Our Political Line: BJP Jhanda and NDA Agenda

It is in this context that I would like to reiterate what I said on assuming the office of the Party President. The way forward

for us is to march ahead with BJP *jhanda* (flag) in one hand and the NDA Agenda in the other.

One of the most significant achievements of the BJP is our success in forging a broad alliance of parties based on a common minimum programme. The National Democratic Alliance is the most stable coalition at the Centre in the history of independent India. It has harmoniously synthesized legitimate regional aspirations with a sound national outlook.

The BJP forged this experiment after much thought and with a clear purpose. This was not a compromise for power, but a principled response to the needs of the situation for providing a stable and purposive government to the nation, which was badly shaken by the dangerous destabilisation games of the Congress Party. This needs to be explained to our workers and our supporters with clarity and confidence. There is no need to be apologetic about this.

Nor should we be apologetic about our ideology. We never gave up, nor will we ever give up, our Party's ideology. We are only conscious of the fact that in the present scenario we are moving ahead in the spirit of the NDA Agenda. We will never force our views and ideas on our allies.

It should be the endeavour of the BJP and our alliance partners to further strengthen the NDA. The success of the NDA experiment is not only the BJP's responsibility, it is the collective duty of all its members. This is possible if all follow the Dharma of Coalition. Personally, I feel that there is a need for greater interaction among the NDA constituents from time to time. It is important that differences are sorted out through dialogue and consultations. By so doing, the BJP and our allies will strengthen India's democratic culture, which is the need of the hour as the era of coalitions has now come to stay.

Congress Party's Increasingly Irresponsible Behaviour

The success of the BJP and the stability of the NDA Government have demoralized the Opposition. The Congress, which is the principal Opposition party, and the Communists, who have become the B-team of the Congress, cannot stomach the fact that the Vajpayee Government is all set to complete its full term

of five years with a strong record of performance, which is why, they have become increasingly irresponsible in their political conduct and behaviour in Parliament. Disruption of the proceedings in Parliament, for no rhyme or reason, has become their favourite pastime. Their boycott of the Defence Minister, Shri George Fernandes, in Parliament is not only against the spirit and norms of democracy, but also has no precedence in Parliamentary history.

Filled with frustration and propelled by prejudice against the BJP, the Congress stooped to a new low of negativism by opposing even an important legislation like POTA. That the situation in the country demands a strong anti-terrorism law, and that POTA is only an improved version of TADA, which was enacted by none other than the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1986, is lost on its present leadership.

Such irresponsible behaviour, however, is not new to the Congress. The nation knows how it opposed our Government's historic decision to make India a nuclear weapons State in May 1998. Also, public memory is not so short as to forget that the Congress Party opposed the Government during the Kargil war – and that too in a manner that could have affected the morale of the soldiers fighting on the border.

All right-thinking people in the country are bewildered that a national party that claims to know the complex problems facing the country because it has the longest experience in governance, has come to conduct itself in such an unprincipled manner. But the reasons for this degeneration are not far to seek. Only a party that has lost its sense of purpose, only a leadership that has no vision about the destiny of the nation, only an organization that has mortgaged its mind to the Marxists, only a once-great national institution that has reduced itself to a dynastic fiefdom, can show such bankruptcy and irresponsibility.

How completely contrary such behaviour is to the dictum, given to us by Dr. Mookerjee, which we followed during our long years in the opposition. He had exhorted us:

“Opposition does not mean senseless or destructive approach to all problems that confront a responsible Government. While, therefore, we may have to attack or

criticise official measures or acts, our aim will be to approach all problems in a constructive spirit so that we may keep the public vigilant and make our humble contribution in developing a real democratic structure for the sound administration of our country.”

Here it may not be out of place to mention the exemplary parliamentary conduct of our leader, Shri Vajpayeeji, when he sat in the opposition for four decades.

The Congress Party may be in power in many States, but it is incapable of addressing any of the major issues facing our country and leading it toward greatness and glory. Precisely for this reason, the responsibility on the BJP has increased manifold.

In today’s political situation, my call to our Party workers is clear: Let us be ever vigilant against the destabilization instincts of the Congress and the Communists. Let us counter the Congress Party effectively and defeat it decisively. Only then will it be forced onto the path of genuine self-transformation. We are progressive in our thinking. Now let us be aggressive in our action to foil the cynical politics of the Congress-Communist combine.

Secularism – Genuine and Pseudo

The success of the NDA experiment has punctured a big hole in our adversaries’ propaganda against our Party. By calling us a “communal” party, these pseudo-secular forces tried to isolate the BJP from the rest of the political establishment. They have failed miserably in their crooked plan and, increasingly, they themselves are getting isolated.

Nobody needs to preach to us the virtues of secularism. We are committed to our motherland’s time-tested *dharma* of secularism. We believe in *Sarva Panth Samadarana* (equal respect for all faiths). This true concept of secularism is in the blood of the Indian people. We are committed to ensuring justice for all. However, we do not believe in appeasing any particular section of society for the sake of cornering their votes or for advancing our political ends. The real threat to secularism comes from the pseudo-secularism practised by our political and ideological rivals with vote-bank politics in mind.

The more we grow, the more is their inability to digest our growth. Their progressive rejection by the people has deepened their frustration. They try to occupy the media space and wage a disinformation campaign against us. They are trying to create confusion by spreading falsehoods. On the one hand, they are trying to mislead our cadres by constantly sending messages that the BJP has given up its political agenda. On the other, they are making a determined bid to drive away our allies, as well as those who are neutral, from, us by saying that the BJP is implementing a “hidden agenda”! This only reflects their bankruptcy. I would like our Party workers to counter this vile propaganda effectively - both on political and intellectual fronts, by fully engaging the media, intelligentsia and cultural resources and through mass contact.

J&K: ‘No’ to Autonomy; ‘Yes’ to Greater Powers, with Regional Devolution

On Jammu & Kashmir, the BJP’s view is very clear: it is an integral and inseparable part of India, and will always remain so. No force on earth can take an inch of this land. The only dialogue with Pakistan can be regarding that part of Kashmir, which is illegally occupied by our neighbour.

We are in favour of decentralization and greater devolution of powers to all States, including Jammu & Kashmir. Our approach to J&K Government’s request for more powers shall be within the spirit of this. There cannot be an autonomous state within our country. There is no question of reverting to the pre-1953 position. If anybody wants to raise this issue, the answer is a big NO.

When we talk of devolution of powers, we shall keep in mind the regional aspirations of Jammu, Ladakh and Leh. The feeling of alienation of the people of these regions should be addressed on priority by the State Government and the Centre. The BJP shall support any agitation in this regard.

NDA Government’s proud record of Initiatives and Achievements

During the last four years, our Government has sincerely and consistently tried to implement the promises contained in the NDA’s common manifesto. We have launched several

developmental programmes and welfare initiatives for the benefit of our people and the country. The national security mechanisms, so important for the defence of our motherland, have been further strengthened. Internal security has certainly improved.

Diplomatic offensive against Pakistan: One of the most significant achievements of our Government has been to expose Pakistan as a promoter of terrorism before the world and to channelize international pressure on Pakistan by highlighting the menace of Pak-sponsored terrorism. Never in the past five decades has there been such widespread international appreciation of, and support for, our stand on Kashmir and the issue of cross-border terrorism.

Terrorism is the enemy of mankind. India is the worst sufferer on account of this. It is quite surprising that the Western countries who have taken an oath to eliminate terrorism are relying on Pakistan, which is the headquarters of international terrorism. It has aided and abetted the Taliban, it is harbouring the Al Quaida, and is waging a proxy war on us. While the Government should continue to impress upon the West not to lean on Pakistan to end terrorism, we must repeatedly remind our people that, ultimately, we have to fight - and win - the battle against ISI-sponsored terrorism on our own.

Economy - from shortages to surplus: An economy of chronic shortages has been transformed into one of surpluses. Our food godowns are filled to the brim. Allocations for Public Distribution System have been doubled. BPL families are getting more at less rates. There is complete food security in the country, thanks to record production of foodgrains by our hardworking kisans. India today is the largest producer of milk in the world.

The foreign exchange reserves are the highest ever. Today, our country can boast of more than 60 million tones of food stock and about 60 billion dollars of foreign exchange reserves. The rate of inflation is the lowest ever. Prices of essential commodities have been effectively contained. Removal of controls and unshackling of the human energies have given a boost to the Information Technology and Educational sectors. Industries such as auto and pharma have achieved world

quality. Consumers are today provided with choice, quality and cost effectiveness.

There was a time, not long ago, when one had to suffer waiting periods of several years for a humble telephone or a gas connection. Today, they are available on demand. What the previous governments could not do in telecom services in 40 year has been achieved by us in just four years. We had heard of prices going up, but here is one sector where tariffs have dramatically gone down.

Rural and urban development: We have reasons to be happy with the way our Government has accorded priority to rural development by significantly enhancing budgetary allocations. The launch of the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana*, with an allocation of Rs. 10,000 crore, including provision of foodgrains worth Rs. 5,000 crore, has given a big fillip to food-for-work and asset-creation programmes in rural areas. The scale of the housing construction programme, both in rural and urban areas, currently being implemented is unprecedented.

Regular enhancement of the Minimum Support Price for farmers, start of a crop insurance scheme, issuance of nearly three crore Kisan Credit Cards, increasing rural lending from Rs. 40,000 crore to Rs. 75,000 crore – these show our commitment to the development of agriculture and rural economy.

The *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*, which our Government launched two years ago, will change the face of rural India. By aiming to connect all the unconnected villages in the country by 2007, it will revolutionalise the rural economy. There is also a revolution in the making on India's highways with the speedy implementation of the National Highway Development Project. Over the next five years, more than Rs. 120,000 crore will be invested in both these road projects, which are the most ambitious infrastructure projects since Independence.

We have been successful in evolving a consensus on revitalising and strengthening the Panchayati Raj system through decentralization.

Other important initiatives: The Prime Minister has been constantly reviewing and monitoring the economy, and directing the removal of bottlenecks to faster growth. A clutch of

innovative measures, including the ambitious scheme of Special Export Zones, have been unveiled to make India a major exporting nation. Native industries have been given due protection through many steps, including anti-dumping measures, to face the challenges of the WTO. Small-scale industries and the KVIC sector have been given a big boost. For the first time, the Government is providing Rs. 17,000 crore for implementing, within five years, a massive scheme for Railway safety. A new spirit of competition has been infused in the insurance sector. The process of disinvestment, aimed at much needed restructuring of PSUs, is being implemented with full transparency.

At the same time, the Government has intensified its focus on the social sector. Some examples of this are – the launch of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, *Rajrajeshwari Scheme* for women, *Bhagya Lakshmi* scheme for girls, *Ashraya Beema* scheme for unorganized labourers, *Valmiki Ambedkar Yojana* for slum dwellers, etc.

The Government has also moved forward in respect of electoral and judicial reforms. Several outdated Acts have been abrogated. A new Civil Procedure Code has been introduced that will significantly cut judicial delays.

For the first time, our Government showed the courage to correct the many distortions in school curricula and in the functioning of educational institutions, which were due to long years of colonial and communist influence.

Protection of reservations for SCs and STs: Our Government has taken several historic decisions for the benefit of SCs, STs and other weaker sections. Five Office Memoranda, with reference to reservations in promotions issued by the previous Congress-backed United Front governments, have been amended. Subsequently, a Constitutional Amendment was introduced to ensure and further enlarge employment opportunities for SCs and STs.

The above list is only illustrative, not exhaustive. It shows how, against many odds, our Government has been trying to fulfil the promises made to the people.

Scam-free record of the NDA Government: In contrast to the record of scams and scandals of previous regimes, the NDA Government has maintained a clean record. From time to time,

driven again by frustration, the Congress and the Communists have been trying to make allegations to tarnish the image of our Government. However, none of their allegations have stuck.

Yes, our Government has many achievements to its credit. But where our Party is lagging behind – and where our Government too is lagging behind – is effective communication of these achievements, as also our various policies, programmes, and planned initiatives in the future, to the people. We have to overcome this weakness with determination and speed.

Development: Need for Acceleration and Improvement

The Vajpayee Government deserves to be complimented for speeding up economic reforms, while assiduously trying to give them a human face. There is both need and scope for further improvement.

There are certain pressing issues that are demanding undelayed redressal. For example, the power situation in many states has assumed crisis proportions. No doubt, this is the sad legacy of many years of neglect, compounded by the initial serious flaws in power sector reforms launched by the Congress government. No doubt, power is a State subject and much of the remedial work is the responsibility of state governments. Nevertheless, the Centre must further intensify its efforts to evolve an early all-party consensus to solve this vexed problem.

Similarly, the looming threat of drought in many parts of the country calls for a combined effort of the Centre and state governments to initiate both immediate relief measures and to undertake permanent steps to drought-proof our agriculture.

We also have to find consensus response to several long-standing issues on the reforms agenda, such as the fiscal ill-health of state governments, phasing out of unmerited subsidies, long-awaited labour reforms, etc. All these are necessary to achieve the target of 8% GDP growth rate, as envisaged in the Tenth Five Year Plan document. However, we need to educate the people on the short-term and temporary difficulties that they might have to face for achieving our long-term developmental goals, which will benefit all our citizens. For this, the

Government should further harmonise its welfare and developmental approaches.

My Appeal to Political Parties

Besides these developmental issues, the country also requires urgent consensus on ways to end the corrosive influence of money power and muscle power on politics. I also have to make another appeal to all the political parties:

“Let us work together to raise the level of political discourse in and outside Parliament and State legislatures. Let us focus more on people’s issues and challenges before the nation, such as population control, environment, water conservation, etc. It is our collective responsibility to remove the widespread sense of cynicism about politics and to improve the image of politicians in the eyes of the common people. It is time we joined hands to end negativism in political and public life. Let us remember that we are not enemies of each other; we are only political rivals in a vibrant democracy.

Frequent strikes, and bandhs cause inconvenience to the public and the destruction of public property as a way of political protest must be deplored by all of us. Instead, let us rather appeal to our people to focus on development by improving work culture and producing more. In this, all should heed the call of our Prime Minister – Development, faster Development and balanced Development.”

Part II

Present Concerns and Future Challenges before the Party

Dear Delegates,

What I have narrated above shows that the BJP has come a long way since its inception. But there is no room for complacency. There are major challenges confronting our Party, our Government, our society and our polity. I shall now turn to these. First of all, let me focus on the immediate political task before our Party. I shall come to the organizational tasks a little later.

Only one thought in your Minds and only one word on your Lips – Victory

The BJP is unquestionably the main political party in India today. We displaced the Congress from this position way back in 1996. Since then, political equations in the country are crystallizing around two main poles represented by the two national parties, BJP and the Congress. Although our Party has grown from strength to strength, we have to admit that our growth has not fully exploited the opportunities caused by the decline of the Congress.

This makes the immediate tasks before the party self-evident. First and foremost, we must train our sights on winning renewed mandates in the forthcoming assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, and putting up good performance in Jammu & Kashmir. Simultaneously, we should gear up for the assembly polls in nine (?) other states next year, including in important states like Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. We are in the process of restructuring wherever the need is felt in the States.

I strongly appeal to each and every worker of the Party in the States going to the polls this year and the next to work with single-minded determination to win. Let there be only one thought in your minds and only one word on your lips – Victory. We can succeed only then.

BJP's twin growth objectives

Beyond the immediate task of preparing for victory in the coming State Assembly elections, we should aim to rapidly expand our Party's regional and social base on the lines of *sarvavyapi* (covering all regions) and *sarvasparshi* (touching all sections of society).

Since 1951, we have only covered half the political journey. We need to become omnipresent and reach out to all, so as to secure a much larger mandate on a consistent basis. It is for all of us to evolve the BJP into a 'mini-Bharat'.

Rapid regional expansion: We have extended our base from Andamans to Assam and from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. However, in recent times, we have suffered some setbacks in States where we were otherwise strong. This requires an in-depth analysis for

necessary course correction. We have to target the Southern, Eastern and North-Eastern regions of our country more vigorously.

For example, there are certain States in which, in spite of supportive objective conditions, our Party has not been able to make inroads. West Bengal and Kerala are prime examples. The Communists' base is fast eroding in these States and the Congress is highly faction-ridden. The people have been looking for a viable alternative, but the BJP so far has been unable to rise to the occasion. I would like our Party units in these two States to honestly introspect, evolve a new strategy and redouble their efforts to achieve a big breakthrough within the next few years.

Rapid social expansion: Ours is a diverse society. Although the BJP has extended its sphere of influence to many new sections of society in the past two decades, some are still beyond our reach. We need to move closer to them. Two categories that are crucial for our Party's sustainable growth and electoral success in the future are: one, farmers, rural artisans and weavers, fishermen, and unorganized labour; two, people belonging to SCs, STs, OBCs and most backward sections of OBCs. Our support base has grown considerably among these economically backward and socially neglected sections. However, there is immense scope for further expansion.

Kisans: As our successful experience in many States has shown, the way to endear our Party to kisans is to regularly take up issues concerning rural people through mass movements and by better communication of our Government's policies and programmes.

SCs, STs, and other weaker sections: We need to do the same to further draw SCs, STs, and other weaker sections towards our Party. We should also take up all their legitimate issues of social justice. Our workers should be in the forefront of mobilizing them in instances of injustice and atrocities. This will help create an enduring emotional bond between them and our Party. However, in so doing, our workers should also ensure that *samajik samarasata* (social harmony) is well protected.

Minorities: As a consequence of the disinformation campaign by our rivals, the gulf between our Party and the minorities continues to remain wide. We need to look at this issue in great depth and evolve an action plan to win them over. In this effort,

our Government's performance and attitude towards the minorities can be made good use of by our workers.

Women: The work of our Party among women has grown considerably over the years. Nevertheless, we have to admit that we need to make greater efforts to mobilize and promote more women in our Party organization and in its various programmes. We have not been able to give greater representation to women in elective bodies beyond what the Party Constitution provides. The reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has greatly increased the opportunities for their participation in political activities. Soon, we would like a similar empowering legislation to be passed for Parliament and State legislatures. This is going to create a silent socio-political revolution in the country. Our Party should not only be prepared for it, but also lead it. For this, all our Party units should actively encourage greater representation for committed and dynamic women activists. The scope of the work of our *Mahila Morchas* also should be rapidly expanded.

Voluntary and constructive work: A relatively new area which our Party should focus on in the coming years is the voluntary sector and constructive activities like water conservation, tree plantation, literacy campaign, population control, helping rural people in conducting gram sabhas, etc. Our workers should establish active contacts with good NGOs and, wherever feasible, set up their own NGOs. They should also set up cooperatives, educational and healthcare institutions, social reform groups, etc. Among other things, all these activities will help the Party to mobilize the youth, who are the main channels of constructive energy. These also multiply and strengthen our Party's links with the people. I may also point out that both the Central and State governments have many schemes, backed by significant resources, to support such activities.

Party Cells: We have recently restructured the existing Party Cells and also expanded their number to cover many new social categories and professions such as weavers, fishermen, slum dwellers, beedi workers, unorganized labour, and also for various professional groups. In response to the growing importance of urban India in national affairs, we shall also set up a new Cell for municipal good governance. Similarly, we shall set up a separate Cell for

the better governance of Panchayati Raj institutions. I would like our State and district units to set up similar Cells at their own levels. In all this, our guiding objective should be to make the BJP more development-oriented and more focused on people's welfare.

Part III

Let us Reinforce our image as a Party with a Difference

Friends,

I have touched upon what we have accomplished so far. I have also dealt with what we should be doing to consolidate our gains and to forge ahead. I would now like to dwell on how we should be doing it.

The answer, we have to recognize, lies in the unity and strength of the Party organization. It lies in the dedication, discipline and dynamism of our Party workers. It lies in the exemplary qualities of idealism and ideological commitment of our self-sacrificing leaders, and their ability to mobilise and inspire the people.

It is these traits that made the people believe that the BJP, like the Bharatiya Jana Sangh previously, was a Party with a Difference. They saw a clear distinction between the BJP and other parties, many of which had succumbed to the corrosive effects of power politics. This image of the BJP, which has been a source of great strength to our Party, persists even today.

Nevertheless, we have to ask ourselves: "Are we fully living up to the ideals set by the founders of our Party? Are we fully measuring up to the expectations of the people?"

An honest answer to these questions makes us admit that some problems and weaknesses have crept into our Party organization in recent years. We have to accept that some undesirable and unacceptable tendencies – such as groupism, factional fights, craze for power, pursuit of personal ambition at the cost of Party's interests – which are the hallmark of Congress and other parties, have found their way into our Party also, though mainly on the periphery. This has caused much harm to our Party in some States.

Introspection, the need of the hour

Clearly, the time has come for all of us, at all levels, to do some serious and sincere introspection and take immediate corrective steps. Every Party member has to earnestly endeavour to correct his or her deficiencies. I want to assert that the Party has to act firmly and nip in the bud such undesirable tendencies. If the Party fails in this task of self-vigil and timely self-correction, then this virus will spread to cause grave maladies. There is no scope for complacency in this regard.

A good way to focus on our self-cleansing exercise is to remind ourselves that the symbol of the BJP is the Lotus, that majestic and pure flower which remains untouched by the pollution surrounding it.

Yesterday, we issued a Code of Conduct with a clear set of Dos and Don'ts for our leaders and workers. Strict adherence to the Code will go a long way in improving our image as a Party with a Difference.

In the context of our ongoing efforts to revitalize the party, I have a few specific thoughts and suggestions to offer.

1. Be more devoted, More committed and better organised

After our becoming a ruling Party at the Centre, the tasks before us have increased immensely. To accomplish these manifold tasks and to achieve the goals of political consolidation and expansion, our leaders and workers at various levels have to demonstrate greater devotion and commitment. We need to approach this task in a focused and systematic manner.

Accordingly, I have institutionalized a new arrangement with clear allocation of roles and responsibilities for all the central office-bearers. Political management and social expansion will be looked after by General Secretaries and one of the Vice Presidents. They will guide the State Units in these respects. *Prabharis* will exclusively look after organizational matters, the expansion of the organizational network, the health of the Party and functioning of the Party machinery at various levels.

I would like to emphasize the need for a better coordination

among State Party functionaries, legislators and MPs from the respective States, *Prabharis* and Central office-bearers.

2. Be agile, be mobile

Ours is a vast country. And we have set ourselves the goal of expanding our frontiers and reaching new horizons. How can we achieve this goal? The only way is by moving out of Delhi and our respective State headquarters. We have to fan out to every nook and corner of the country. There is no substitute to intensive and constant touring by the office-bearers to galvanize our cadres, get a first-hand feel of the problems and developments, and revitalize the Party machinery. Touring cannot be a one-time affair. It has got to be a regular exercise.

Here, we need to follow the example of Deendayalji – “One foot in train, the other foot on the ground”. We also have the inspiring example of Shri Atalji, Advaniji, Joshiji and Thakreji, who travelled untiringly and built the Party organization brick by brick.

As the President of our party, I desire that all our national, state, district and mandal level office-bearers spare a minimum of 15 days in a month to go around various territories of our country to accomplish the tasks given to them. I suggest that national level office-bearers, between them, have to cover each and every district headquarters in the country in the next one year. State office-bearers and MPs have to reach out to each and every mandal; and district level office-bearers have to fan out to each and every village in the next one year. As often as possible, we should make night stay at villages and in *bastees*. All this is a part of the *yagna* that we propose to undertake to galvanize the Party. I would like to inform you that the Party will soon launch a massive “*Gaon Chalo*” programme countrywide.

3. Recognise and respect *karyakarta*

Our cadres are our soldiers in this campaign. No Party can survive if it neglects its workers. There is a need for a live, vibrant and constant interaction between the

workers and leaders. Central Ministers, MPs, MLAs and other elected representatives should always remind themselves that it is the Party and its countless humble *karyakartas* that have made them what they are. So, they too must pledge to give their best for the Party and to do all they can to enthuse and assist its workers. They should always be accessible to Party workers and endeavour to solve their problems.

In turn, our Party workers should be always accessible to the common people. As far as possible, *karyakartas* must be careful to take up public issues, and not grievances of personal nature, to Ministers, MPs, and MLAs.

4. Achieve better coordination between the Party and our Government

More than four years of the NDA Government have convinced me that the good performance of our Government itself can be a powerful new plank for achieving the Party's goal of consolidation and expansion. For this, however, we need better coordination between the Party and our Government.

It so happens that, in these four and a half years, I have had the useful experience of working both in the Party and the Government. My work as the Minister of Rural Development made me aware of the immense possibilities for educating the people about the vision, policies, programmes and achievements of our Government. Conversely, it gave me an opportunity to hear first-hand from the people their feedback on the performance of various schemes and programmes. This way, both the Government and the Party will be benefited through better coordination.

This process is now in need of institutionalization. Under the guidance of the Prime Minister, I have decided to enlist the participation of some of our young and enthusiastic MPs to run an efficient coordination centre at the Party office. This centre will receive grievances/suggestions and ideas from Party workers across the country and forward them to the respective

Ministries. It will also liaise with ministers and bureaucrats for the speedy redressal of their problems and grievances.

I urge all ministers to fully cooperate in making this effort at coordination successful.

5. Change the mindset of our workers

The fact that our Party was in the opposition for a long time has naturally influenced the thinking of our workers. No doubt, the BJP performed its role as an opposition party admirably. The mindset of the workers of an opposition party is to oppose, to agitate, to criticize, and to highlight the shortcomings. However, now the Party's role is different. Our workers have to reorient themselves as disciplined soldiers, enthusiastic communicators and skilful mobilisers of the people in the service of the Government. In performing this role, they have to also realize the limitations and constraints within which the Government functions and that many of these constraints are a legacy of the past which cannot be immediately removed.

In the new role, our workers have to perform another important task: that of receiving people's feedback on the performance of the Government, serving as a useful link between the Government and the people, and functioning as an effective watch-dog. This role will have to be performed not in an agitational way, but with responsibility, discipline, and tact, always mindful that one's pronouncements and conduct do not embarrass the Government, confuse the people, affect the cohesion of the Party, and give a handle to the opposition to criticize our Party and the Government.

A ruling party's mindset also entails that our workers develop the ability to ensure effective implementation of the Government's various programmes for time-bound results, ensure people's participation in such programmes wherever necessary, and ensure accountability of the implementation machinery at various levels. All these functions also make it necessary that they develop an

aptitude to learn various developmental issues and be trained in communicating effectively with the people.

In the months and years to come, the BJP will have to pay a lot of attention to this imperative of mindset transformation. We have a massive training programme in the offing for various levels of Party functionaries.

6. Groom leaders of tomorrow

Leadership development is an important component of our effort to revitalize the Party. However, we are not paying adequate and sustained attention to this need. Just as the Party needs a large army of *karyakartas* who will work as dedicated soldiers, it also needs a large number of dynamic, determined, capable and exemplary leaders at various levels. We should especially catch promising *karyakartas* in their youth and groom them and train them well to take up more and more challenging assignments. Development of leaders with charisma and mass appeal, but wedded to the ideals, ideology and ethics of our Party, should be considered one of the most important tasks in Party building.

Traditionally, ABVP and Yuva Morcha have served as good grooming grounds for young Party leaders. We will continue to look to them for fresh blood. At the same time, I would like the various Morchas and Cells also to attract men and women with leadership qualities and launch them into challenging tasks.

Similarly, our political recruitment process should set an example to others. We should promote the entry of more and more people with proven qualities and abilities into our Party.

7. Resolve to make the *Aajivan Sahyogi Yojana* a success

Our Party has always underscored the importance of transparency in the way it collects funds and spends them for various legitimate Party activities. As the Party has grown, so have its financial needs. A unique initiative that we launched five years ago was *Aajivan Sahyogi Yojana* to collect small but regular (annual) contributions from

all those who wished to be its life long associates. While the scheme is undoubtedly laudable, its progress has been indifferent, with many State Units not exerting fully to realize the targets given to them.

I earnestly call upon all members of the National Council to make the success of the *Aajivan Sahyogi Yojana* a personal priority.

Conclusion

Four Ds for the Party and the Government

My dear Party colleagues,

If I have to sum up the main requirements that would make the BJP “A Party with a Difference”, and the NDA Government “A Government with a Difference”, I would encapsulate them as the Four-D Formula.

The four Ds for our Party are:

Dedication, Discipline, Determination and Dynamism.

The four Ds for our Government are:

Democracy, Decentralization, Development and Defence.

If we master this Four-D Formula, I have no doubt that both our Party and our Government will find themselves on a path of sustainable success, adding strength and stature to our nation and bringing well-being and happiness to our people.

Nation First, Party Next, Self Last

Yes, we can master this formula for growth and success. All we need is belief in ourselves, faith in our Party’s founding ideals, pride in our past, confidence in our future, and courage to take big steps forward.

We have the torch of our ideology of nationalism and humanism in our hands, inspiring our hearts and illuminating our path. Let us recall the famous quote of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaji.

“The whole of Bharat is one and the people are one and the people must feel this. The different organs cannot be synthesized into human body; the body is a whole and the organs are its parts. This way, every organ works for the whole body. Similarly, the various organs of a nation

must shape themselves to suit the national interest. The sects, provinces and languages are all important but only so long as they are favourable to national interest. If they are not so, they must be sacrificed in national interest”.

We are blessed with the wise leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a leader, a statesman, of course. But he is so much more. Under his stewardship, the prestige, image and respect of our country has gone up in the international community. In Shri Lal Krishna Advani we have a strong and determined personality with unmatched organizational skills and moral authority to guide us. These two towering personalities are followed by a band of dedicated leaders which includes a talented and highly promising second generation, followed by a budding third generation. We also have a vast organization of dedicated and self-motivated *karyakartas* and a huge network of well-wishers, which contributes to our Party’s strength.

There is love, and affection for us among the people of our country. Our task is to reach out to them by going to their inviting doorsteps, to educate them and to learn from them, to mobilize them and be motivated by them, and to together march on our chosen path of duty towards our cherished goal. In this journey, let each and every leader and worker of the BJP take a solemn pledge that for us, “Nation is first, Party is next and Self is last.”

Victory shall be ours.

Vande Mataram!
Jai Hind!!



National Executive

New Delhi

23 December, 2002

Adaraneeya Shri Atalji, Adaraneeya Shri Advaniji, my dear colleagues in the National Executive,

I extend a very warm welcome to all of you at this important meeting of our Party National Executive. It is a meeting to rejoice, to celebrate – and to re-dedicate ourselves to the tasks ahead.

Just look at the two events that flank our two-day meeting. Yesterday we rejoiced at the swearing in of Shri Narendrabhai Modi in Gandhinagar as the Chief Minister after a spectacular victory, which gave our Party a renewed mandate in the just-concluded elections to the Gujarat Legislative Assembly.

And day after tomorrow, we will celebrate the 78th birthday of our beloved leader and Prime Minister, Shri Atalji. It is a very special day for us – indeed, for all the people of India. In Shri Atalji, we have a *mahapurush* leading this *mahaan* nation. His wisdom, sagacity, experience and his personal quality of carrying people of all shades along are priceless assets for our Party and our Nation.

Shri Atalji, the founder of our Party and the fountain of inspiration for all of us, has always been very dear to us, very special to us. And we too – all the lakhs of our Party *karyakartas* – claim a special place in his heart. After all, Shri Atalji himself was also a *karyakarta* like all of us – hardworking, dedicated and fully committed to the cause of the Party and Nation. Hence, it is with immense love that I, on behalf of all of you, and on behalf of all the members of this great Party, extend our heartiest felicitations to Shri Atalji on his birthday.

We have decided to celebrate his birthday – this year and in future – as *Vikas Divas* or Development Day. We will use this

occasion to spread his great message – Let us make India a Developed Nation by following the mantra of “*Vikas, Teji se Vikas, Santulit Vikas aur Sab ka Vikas*”.

For this, I have asked the General Secretaries to draw up a programme from 25 December to 12 January, which is *Swami Vivekananda Jayanti*. I would like Members of the Executive to give their ideas and suggestions to make this programme a success.

Let us Replicate the Gujarat Spirit

Friends, I now turn to the other cause of our rejoicing. Today, on behalf of all of you and on behalf of millions of workers and supporters of the BJP, I extend the heartiest of congratulations to Shri Narendrabhai, Shri Keshubhai, Shri Rajendra Singh Rana and all our dear colleagues in the Gujarat unit for securing a historic victory for the Party in the Assembly elections. Your victory has electrified the atmosphere in the country and energized the rank and file of our Party everywhere. Today, I also applaud the work of Shri Arun Jaitley, Shri Sanjaybhai Joshi, Shri Ramdas Agarwal and Shri Naqvi at the Party headquarters who lent excellent support to the Gujarat team. The entire Party worked as a team.

Today, I must also express our grateful appreciation of the guidance we received from Shri Advaniji throughout the Gujarat campaign, in which he himself participated tirelessly. The Prime Minister addressed four very useful meetings in the four regions. A number of Central Ministers and other Party leaders participated actively in the campaign. The campaign management, media and publicity management, logistics management – all this was conducted in a highly professional manner.

Hence, if anybody asks us whether we would repeat the Gujarat ‘experiment’ elsewhere, our answer should be: “Yes, we shall replicate our Gujarat ‘experience’ everywhere, because in Gujarat we have again proved to ourselves that collective work is the key to success.”

Modi versus Sonia – It was an Unequal Contest

Today, my very special applause is reserved for Shri Narendrabhai, who fought like a lion in the face of unprecedented calumny against him and our Party, and made, on the counting day, his opponents run for cover. This election was not a Modi vs. Vaghela contest. The Congress Party and the Leftist Lobby made it

into a Modi vs. Sonia contest. The results have shown what an unequal bout it was.

Friends, this election will be remembered not only for the nature and scale of our victory, but also for the viciousness of the anti-BJP, anti-*Hindutva* and – if I have to call a spade a spade – anti-Hindu campaign conducted by the Congress and the Communists before, during, and, sadly, even after the polls. The Congress President took the lead by making many highly objectionable pronouncements, perhaps the most offensive and outlandish of which was her charge that Gujarat, the land of Gandhi, was turning into the land of Godse! This was a slur on the *asmita* and *atma-gaurav* of the people of Gujarat, forcing Shri Narendra Modi to launch his *Gaurav Yatra*. Today, the whole world knows what the response of the people of Gujarat to this *Yatra* was.

The outcome of this election has demolished the myth that the Congress is getting revived on account of its leadership.

The real significance of the Gujarat mandate

It is sad to say the least that the Congress Party has learnt no lessons from its debacle in Gujarat. Consider the Congress President's flare-up, after five days of stunned silence, that the BJP won in Gujarat by "spreading poison". Other Congress leaders have said that we won by playing the politics of "threats and intimidation". Rather than accepting defeat gracefully, Congress leaders have again resorted to falsehood, thereby again insulting the people of Gujarat. That there was a 90 per cent turnout of minorities in a violence-free election disproves their bogus allegation.

The message that flowed from a record turnout of 62 per cent of the people of Gujarat is sought to be distorted by the vanquished and frustrated political forces who never had any clue as to what was at stake in Gujarat elections. As the Gujarat election process peaked, the national perception crystallized the central issues as terrorism and extremism and political opportunism. Our political adversaries were rightly recognised as those willing to compromise on national interests for short-term vote-bank considerations. The people of this country had been watching in anguish as the country was being bled by terrorists and extremist forces over the last twenty years. Gujarat elections offered an opportunity to effectively articulate their concerns on these larger issues and it was the BJP

that was overwhelmingly seen by the people of Gujarat as a Party that understood their anguish and concerns, and was determined to address with firmness and farsightedness.

The voters of Gujarat reposed their faith in the BJP yet again because the choice before them was very clear. It was between the forces of nationalism and the forces of pseudo-secularism. Gujarat was hence not a mere political victory for BJP, but it was a mandate for the ideology that has always held the nation's interest as its core strength.

We shall make Gujarat an 'Aadarsh Pradesh'

Today I have a message for our Party colleagues in Gujarat. The elections are now behind us and our tasks and duties are before us. Not only the people of Gujarat, but the people all over the country, will keenly watch how our Government will perform. As before, we should – and I am sure we will – prove all our opponents wrong. I congratulate Shri Narendra Modi on unambiguously declaring, both before and after the elections, that he stands for the unity, dignity, welfare and development of all the five crore people of Gujarat, without any distinction or discrimination.

The BJP assures one and all that our practice shall be true to our motto – “Justice for All and Appeasement of None”, in contrast to the Congress party's long record of “Appeasement of Minoritism and Injustice for Minorities”. I urge our minority brethren to see through this cynical game, shun the Congress and other pseudo-secular parties everywhere, and forge a new equation of mutual understanding with the BJP to further the cause of national integration, nation building, and their own welfare. Vote bank politics has done incalculable damage to the minorities and it is time they realized it.

Our Party has strongly and unequivocally condemned the violence, both Godhra and post-Godhra. The State Government did its best to contain the situation. There can be no justification for shedding the blood of innocent people, irrespective of the caste or community they belong to, in a civilized society.

I wish to assure the people of our country on one more score. We are determined to make Gujarat a Model State, an *Adarsh Pradesh*, free of fear, full of opportunities, a State whose economy will be put on a track of rapid growth, and in which the fruits of development will reach all its people fairly, but especially to the poor and the

marginalized of all communities. I have full confidence that this will happen because the people of Gujarat are hardworking and entrepreneurial.

***'Vijay Parv'* and the tasks it imposes on us**

Friends, from one victory it is time to march towards many victories. If Goa signified a turn around, Gujarat marked the beginning of "*Vijay Parv*" as our Hon'ble Prime Minister has so aptly described it. This *Parv* will see our Party's victory in many States which are going to the polls in 2003, and it will be crowned by the BJP winning a bigger mandate, in the 2004 Parliamentary elections.

In Gujarat, we have scored a hat trick - by winning consecutively in 1995, 1998 and 2002. Similarly, we shall score a hat trick at the Centre by winning in 1998, 1999 and 2004. I have defined our target as 300 seats for the BJP in the next Lok Sabha elections. I did not say so as a wild estimate. I always believed that one day our Nation would travel on the path of the ideology that has all along been guiding us and that moment of reckoning is not very far. But to make that tryst with destiny, we have to gear ourselves up and get our act together.

Right now, our immediate task is to gear up for the forthcoming Assembly elections in nine States. Wherever the Congress is in harness in these States, its defeat is a certainty, a writing on the wall. The by-elections in Rajasthan and Assam are a barometer to the mood and mind of the people. Hence, my first appeal to all of you is to plunge headlong into preparations for the coming Assembly elections, leaving nothing to chance and attending to every single detail well in advance. Our thrust should be on three main areas:

1. Campaign against the non-performance of Congress governments and infighting in the Congress Party

We must begin by mounting a powerful people's campaign against the non-performance, misrule, inefficiency, corruption, worsening law and order situation and non-fulfilment of promises, which is in evidence everywhere in Congress-ruled States. We must also expose how the Congress leaders are engrossed more in infighting and power struggles than in the development of their States and the welfare of their people.

Examples abound. Both in MP and Rajasthan, poor people are condemned to be victims of hunger and starvation,

even though the Centre has provided more than adequate amount of foodgrains. That hunger-related deaths have taken place in the midst of plenty in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan should make the head of every Congressman hang in shame. It is the responsibility of the State Governments to ensure proper implementation of the *Antyodaya Anna Yojana*, which is the most comprehensive and cheapest ever food security scheme for the poorest five crore people in our country, and the Food for Work Programme incorporated into the *Sampoorna Rozgar Yojana*. However, Congress governments are showing shocking apathy in implementing them.

Atrocities against women, Dalits and other weaker sections have come to be a regular feature in States under the care of Congress Governments. In Jammu & Kashmir, Congress is a party to unacceptable compromises by releasing terrorists.

We see that in MP, the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister are at loggerheads. In Rajasthan, people are thoroughly disillusioned with the non-performance of the Congress Government. In Karnataka, allowing Veerappan to roam, kidnap and kill freely is an example of the State Government's total incompetence. In Kerala, the Government has no money even to pay employees' salaries. Yet, the former Chief Minister and the present Chief Minister are involved in an ugly battle, thus paralyzing the State administration. In Maharashtra, the PCC President regularly fires salvos against his own government – both against the Chief Minister and the NCP, which is an alliance partner. In Assam, the Chief Minister does not seem to be in command at all.

In Chhattisgarh, a former Congress Chief Minister is openly speaking out against the Chief Minister, declaring that this is the most corrupt government he has ever seen. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister is practising the politics of manipulation and has become infamous for the persecution of the Opposition. Dissatisfaction and dissent is fast brewing in Punjab. The talk of the town in Punjab is that the Congress has a three-point agenda – *Badli*, *Badla* and *Badal*. The Delhi Government has only a one-point

agenda: that of forgetting its responsibilities and accusing the Centre everyday for everything.

The deception and double standards of the Congress Party are also evident in providing free power before elections in Punjab and giving no power after elections. Now, the same party is promising free power in Andhra Pradesh.

Our Party workers must also highlight how the Chief Ministers of Chhattisgarh and Punjab, just to divert people's attention from the non-performance of their own governments, resorted to the most undignified acts of gimmickry in Delhi by holding *dharnas* and courting arrests in front of the Prime Minister's residence. Never in the history of independent India has such disrespect to the office of the Prime Minister been shown by Chief Ministers. This demonstrates the depth of degeneration in the Congress Party's culture.

Our Party workers must seek to emulate the excellent work done by the State BJP Units of Rajasthan and Jharkhand where the party comprehensively won the recent by-elections. I compliment the State President and other leaders of the party in both states.

2. Campaign against pseudo-secularism and our opponents' indifference to threats to India's national security

Friends, I have said it before and I say it again today. There is no need to be apologetic about our ideology of Cultural Nationalism, nor about our firm commitment to the common agenda of the National Democratic Alliance. "*Ek Haath Mein BJP Ka Jhanda, Doosre Haath Mein NDA Agenda*" – that is our line.

We should firmly expose our adversaries' politics of defaming our Party and our ideology, and of compromising on issues that weaken national security. Thus, our Party should campaign for an effective nationwide law against conversion by fraudulent means. This is not merely an issue that legitimately agitates all Hindus, but it is closely linked to the interests of national integration, national security and social cohesion. Everybody should understand that conversions by fraudulent means are not tolerated in any country. Hence, they cannot be justified under a perverse definition of

secularism. The Party has to mobilize strong public opinion to ensure that all State governments pass this law.

I would like to urge the Government to take early steps for scrapping the IMDT in Assam, which has failed to achieve the purpose. Illegal and large-scale influx of Bangladeshis into India is not a Hindu-Muslim question but one that is directly linked to our national unity and national security and national economy. We cannot be unmindful of the growing presence of Al-Qaida in Bangladesh, its links to the ISI, and their sinister designs against India, both in the short-term and long-term.

POTA needs to be effectively used to contain terrorism. The turn of events in Jammu & Kashmir should be an eye opener. Despite the Congress-PDP combine's overtures towards forces speaking for those believing in terrorism, one PDP legislator was killed.

The entire country is relieved at the judgement of the POTA court against the accused in the Black December terrorist attack on Parliament. It is not surprising that voices of protest are being heard from divisive and some pseudo-secular forces. It is amazing that we have leaders and parties who build defences for conspirators involved in this anti-national attack on Parliament. I am at a loss to understand as to how there could be human rights for terrorists who believe in killing innocent people. There cannot be progress without peace. And we cannot have peace in an environment of social tensions, extremism, etc. Terrorism is a challenge that needs to be squarely addressed and that is the message of Gujarat. Terrorism spares none – not innocents, not those who oppose it and certainly not those who are soft on it.

Our Party workers should strongly and unapologetically defend the NCERT's effort to remove the distortions in our school textbooks, introduced in the past by Communist and pseudo-secular intellectuals.

The Gujarat message is loud and clear. The message is that in the name of politically motivated secularism, the countrymen are not willing any more to tolerate either Hindu-bashing or the double standards being resorted to by certain political parties. For us, development is the

mantra and hence we believe in ushering in prosperity in an atmosphere of peace.

Today, I would also like to make an appeal to those who speak in the name of *Hindutva* but whose pronouncements sometimes sound as if they are only reacting to the extremism and intolerance that has taken roots across the border. *Hindutva* is a noble and elevating concept and, as the Supreme Court has rightly declared, *Hindutva* and extremism cannot go together, *Hindutva* and intolerance cannot go together. The Supreme Court has in the context stated : "Thus, it cannot be doubted, particularly in view of the constitutional bench decision of this court, that the words 'Hinduism' and '*Hindutva*' are not necessarily understood, and construed narrowly, centred only to the strict Hindu religious practices unrelated to the culture and ethics of the people of India, the way of life of the Indian people considering the terms "Hinduism" or "*Hindutva*" per se as depicting hostility, enmity or intolerance towards other religious faiths or professing communalism, proceeds from improper appreciation and perception of the true meaning of these expressions emerging from a detailed discussion in the earlier authorities of this court."

3. Campaign for highlighting the landmark achievements and unique initiatives of the NDA Government

We are indeed happy that under the able leadership of our beloved Prime Minister, the Government rose to the occasion and effectively addressed the problem of drought in several parts of the country. The Government has also taken concrete initiatives in the direction of some far reaching outcomes as in the case of linking of rivers. A Task Force under an able person has already been set up. This long awaited Development project is the crystallization of the will of the nation. Linking of rivers is yet another vindication of our commitment to 'Knit India' together. Rapid progress on the Golden Quadrilateral part of the national highway project is being hailed all over the country and abroad. Setting up of Rs. 17,000 crore Special Railway Safety Fund, launching of Rs. 15,000 crore National Rail Vikas Yojana for strengthening the high

density rail network and connectivity with Ports are some of the biggest initiatives since Independence for the development of the long-neglected railway infrastructure. At the same time, I urge the NDA Government to take similar big initiatives in the welfare sector. There is a need to expand the scope of the Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme to cover more crops, more areas and more farmers. Three crore Kisan Credit Cards have already been issued and I urge the Government to ensure coverage of all eligible farmers by March 2004. *Raja Rajeswari, Bhagya Shree, Ashray Beema Yojana* need to be further popularized. BJP workers have to take active interest in mobilizing and involving the people in these schemes. The Government should also focus attention on the mobilization of additional resources and proper implementation of *Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana*, a novel project for enhancing rural road connectivity.

The Government should come out at the earliest with a new Constitutional amendment to empower Panchayati Raj and local bodies with effective financial and administrative powers.

Friends, the Central Government has also succeeded in getting the nod of the Parliament for some historic Bills. These include those cracking down heavily on defaulters of bank loans, ensuring the right to information, conferring the right to education on the future hope of our country, as also those relating to electoral reforms and environmental protection. We are proud that we have been able to create a situation in which there is no waiting list, queue, shortage or black market, be it telephone connection, gas connection, cement, sugar or food grains. What I am trying to highlight is that we have done enough to stake claim to the confidence of the people. At the same time, there is much more still to be done and so we should never be complacent.

Implement the tasks mandated in Delhi Sankalp

Friends, the three-pronged campaign effort that I have outlined above is externally directed. But we also need to intensify another effort, which should be internally directed. And this is the imperative

to strengthen our organization and remove the shortcomings in the functioning of our various State units, district units, and local units. The tasks involved in this regard are set forth in an elaborate manner in the Delhi *Sankalp*, which we adopted at the National Council meeting in August. I do not wish to reiterate them.

However, the very fact that I am referring to this issue again shows that addressing it – and redressing the maladies in the organization – is critical for achieving our immediate-term and long-term objectives. The serious developments in the legislature Party in UP recently – and similar developments in Chhattisgarh and Karnataka earlier – have deeply disappointed and distressed our *karyakartas* as well as our supporters. I call upon the Party cadres to always bear in mind that we are a Party with a Difference. Every leader in the Party shall always be guided by the fact that their behaviour has a bearing on the Party. I wish to make it very clear that the Party will come down very heavily against those crossing the *Lakshman Rekha*.

I, along with the General Secretaries and other office-bearers, have begun the massive exercise of reaching out to the Party workers throughout the country. We have had successful Zonal conferences, direct interaction with District Presidents and State Council meetings as part of the effort to widen our social and political base and to further energise the organization. At this juncture, I am happy to state that *Gaon Chalo Abhiyan* (Go to Villages) has received tremendous response. We need to cover every village in every region before the next round of elections. I am also happy to acknowledge that coordination between the Government and the Party, the Party and the Cadres and the Cadres and the people has significantly improved and it shall provide necessary momentum for further action. As a result of these efforts, our workers have got galvanized all over the country.

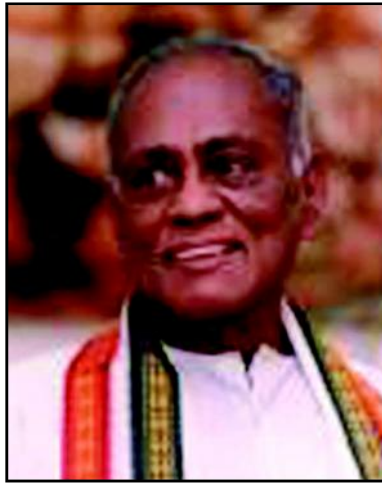
Friends, I would like to make it clear that it is not enough to harp on the failures of our opponents. You may also recall that in the last National Council meeting, soon after assuming the Presidentship of the Party, I suggested a mid-term appraisal of the performance of the Central Government, so that necessary corrective measures could be taken as warranted. I have also underscored the need for introspection at all levels with a view to improving the health of the Party. I have also mentioned that as a Party we have only travelled half way and have miles to go

still. It is necessary for all of us to remember that every individual, institution and political party has to have the necessary ability and honesty to identify and address shortcomings for a focused, well defined and productive journey ahead. I am happy to say that the introspection and evaluation efforts put in by the Party and the Government have begun to yield dividends. We need to carry it forward with enhanced vigour and commitment to achieve our goals.

I would like to once again reiterate that we have only travelled halfway. Our destination is still ahead.

Thank you!
Vande Mataram!!





Presidential Speeches
SHRI K. JANA
KRISHNAMURTHY

National Executive

Panaji (Goa)

12 April, 2002

Dear Friends,

We met in Delhi four months ago in December last. Since then there have been a few developments which have to be taken note of by this Executive Meeting now being held in Goa. As we all know Goa is to go to polls very soon and it is but appropriate that we hold our National Executive Meeting in this beautiful city of Panjim at the invitation of our Goa Pradesh Unit.

We had held our National Executive earlier also in the city. Earlier to that also we had met here. Hence our Goa workers have sufficient experience in making all necessary arrangements for this meeting of ours and I would like to thank the Goa workers for hosting this meeting.

Goa is to go to polls soon. The ministry headed by Shri Parikkar endeared itself by its work to the people of Goa but then the situation got built up to necessitate a fresh poll. Let us all hope the people of Goa will choose a BJP Government for the full term of five years.

When we met last, we had hopefully looked forward for electoral success in Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and also in Punjab where we had our ally in Akali Dal. Our hopes have been belied. The verdict of people in all these states was negative as far as we were concerned. In Uttar Pradesh, we were to be content with the third position while we were reasonably sure that we would retain our number one position. As a true democratic party we respect the verdict of the electorate and therefore we decided to sit in the opposition.

In Uttaranchal, which was part of Uttar Pradesh till a year and odd ago, we were the ruling party on the basis of strength we had acquired during 1996 elections. During election campaign the public opinion also was favourable for a BJP Ministry being formed there. But the results proved otherwise. In Punjab we got the worst beating. There was anti-incumbency factor but it affected BJP more than Akali Dal which was the major partner.

Delhi Corporation results have capped our electoral disappointment. We have been worsted in the corporation polls. It cannot be denied that public opinion was not exactly in our favour. We had to pay the penalty for some of the factors which were within our control and the rest which were not within our control.

In a democracy and that too for a mature party like BJP, poll reverses should make us go in for the factors which are responsible for our electoral reverses rather than rueing over the loss. Yes, as our Prime Minister succinctly put it, we are to go in for introspection.

This is not the first time we have had to face electoral defeat. The greatest set back for us was in 1984 when in Lok Sabha election we managed to secure only two seats, one from Andhra and the other from Gujarat. Our tallest leader also had to face electoral defeat. At that time everyone, especially our political opponents and critics, predicted the demise of the party itself but history is witness as to how we retrieved the party from its peripheralisation and today we are the biggest political force.

It is this determination, this acceptance of challenge to our very strength and existence which have been the hallmarks of our party's strength and character that will meet the situation now also.

We will have to await the detailed report from the states concerned to know what exactly went wrong and where exactly we erred in our assessment and campaign. It is only after that we can take corrective steps if need be. But then the time now requires the combined and cooperative effort of all of us in party organisation to prove to the world that whatever electoral set back we have suffered in the recently held election is a temporary phenomenon which will get rectified in the following few months. The route of escapism, escaping from responsibility and accountability, can never

be the choice of strong willed and determined *karyakartas* of a political party and much more so in our party. So let us not try to run away from our responsibilities, let us not shy away from the harsh realities of our political life and let us also not wish away our reverses. Time has come to reassess the situation, reassert our stand on various issues and reevaluate our strength and weaknesses.

There is an impression that some of our budget proposals have also contributed to our setback. Even our Prime Minister has made mention of it. This is a matter that needs to be gone into carefully and if this impression proves to be correct then the matter needs to be examined as to how to neutralise the adverse impact or to go in for immunisation.

Friends,

The last three years have not been exactly favourable for Gujarat. The year 2000 saw that State reeling under severe drought. Even while it was recovering from the ill effects of it, a severe earthquake took place in early 2001. Thanks to the strenuous efforts of the State Government, the State was speeding up the reconstruction work when this year communal riots of severe nature, have gripped Gujarat. No state, much more so Gujarat, deserves to such successive natural calamities and manmade calamity. The resilience and determination of Gujarat people are well known and even as they bravely faced the calamities they had to endure in the year 2000 and 2001, they are sure to come out of the testing times of 2002 also. In all these three years, the State Government very firmly dealt with the situation it faced and it goes to the credit of the people and Government of Gujarat for having left behind their experiences of 2000 and 2001 as bad dream and for having travelled along the path of relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation. I am equally sure that the Gujarat Government now also will overcome the present difficult situation and put Gujarat on the road to recovery and progress. I must mention here that the role of opposition and our critics was not exactly commendable, but on the other hand, condemnable. Every time Gujarat faced severe situations as mentioned, above our opponents and critics mounted a severe attack on State Government and with orchestrated voice demanded the head of the Chief Minister. When

the people were facing a calamity and when the Government was struggling to calm down the situation, the role of opposition and our opponents should have been to strengthen the efforts of all those who were strenuously exerting themselves to contain the situation, but on the other hand, their efforts were directed towards demoralising and discrediting those who were carrying out their responsibilities sincerely. I strongly condemn the hue and cry of those who demanded the head of Chief Minister of Gujarat. The nation needs to be saved from these forces whose only aim seems to be to destabilise the BJP Government even when the situation demanded the cooperation of every one to restore normalcy in a riot torn state.

The country will have to find a solution to the communal strife if it were to progress. Social disharmony and internal strife cannot help our nation to move forward. All sections of people need to ponder over this seriously. Every section of society, when it thinks that it is whole of the part, must realise that it is simply part of the whole, so much so its welfare and well being depends upon those of the entire society. In any communal strife there is always one who provokes and another provoked. The effort has so far mainly remained in advising and attacking the provoked. This has given rise to a psychology amidst the provoked that it is the victim in every sense. If the message can go to everyone in the society that whosoever provokes another, and whoever takes initiative in provoking or attacking another, whatever religion he may belong to, as goondaism does not have religion, the state as well as society will come down on him heavily to punish him, then the whole society and everyone in society will remain assured that there is justice rendered to all with no appeasement of anyone. I feel this is the only solution to this vexed problem and I appeal to everyone, especially the political parties, social and other organisations, media etc. to ponder over this and cooperate.

I am sorry to point out that the attitude of the main opposition is not at all healthy and not at all conducive to the healthy growth of democracy. Whether Congress likes it or not, the Indian electorate has given its verdict in favour of an NDA Government at the Centre and made Congress sit in the opposition. This verdict of the electorate must be respected and Congress must learn to respect

it. As an opposition it has its right to criticise and attack the government. We do not deny that right. But they are crossing all limits. Take the case of POTO. It came up for discussion in Parliament. They can oppose any provision they object to. The Party which brought TADA, the Party which misused TADA, the Party ruled States whose Chief Ministers, Director Generals of Police and Chief Secretaries have by and large agreed and wanted such a type of law as POTO to deal with terrorism whose ugly face is seen in many parts of our country, opposed the very need of such a law. They opposed the law in Rajya Sabha necessitating the summoning of a Joint Session of both the Houses of Parliament.

In the last few years BJP has been moving in the direction of politics of consensus from that of confrontation. We are succeeding in our efforts. We could evolve consensus with more than twenty different parties on the basis of a Common Agenda and thereby provided good governance with a stable government. Our desire is to go in for consensus even with the main opposition party atleast on vital issues such as eradication of poverty, minimising unemployment, growth oriented economic approach, fight against terrorism, building up social harmony, upholding the unity and integrity of the country etc. In the name of the best national interests I urge the Congress to see reason and cooperate where it can and should. But if the Congress chooses to stick to the path of confrontation, the BJP inspite of having chosen the path of consensus is prepared to accept the challenge of Congress in its politics of confrontation.

Friends,

Economic reform measures are crucial if one is seriously committed to bring the economy out of mess. In a fiscal situation where the country has to borrow even to meet part of the debt servicing, let alone being able to meet developmental and current expenditure, tightening up of belt is a must. Moreover, it is quite essential to generate resources to meet social sector developments like primary education, healthcare and drinking water. The party is deeply committed to social sector development since we can not afford to keep a section of the society out of developmental benefits for long. Corrections of fiscal imbalances and need to meet

social and physical infrastructure developments necessitates some amount of sacrifice by the comparatively better off sections.

But the crucial question in this context is how much the party would be able to convince the section of society which is affected by the economic reform measures-specially the second generation. Phasing and sequencing of economic reforms should also keep in mind our capacity to manage politically. Time has come for an indepth analysis of the issue so that a healthy balance could be struck between economic rationality behind economic reforms and capacity of the party for political management.

In a country like India where we don't have adequate social safety net, often retired persons have to depend on their hard earned savings during their old age. Whatever may be the economic justification behind cut in interest rates, many retired persons have, suddenly, been made to look around for support due to fall in income through interests on savings. It is purely a humanitarian issue. Where should they go for their livelihood ?

Therefore I appeal to the government to introduce adequate social safety net measures before initiating steps towards the lower interests rate regime, which no doubt, is necessary for economic development.

It is crucial to have cooperation of people for implementation of economic reforms. While they have to tighten their belt, whether it is surcharge on income tax, cut in interests rates on small savings or hike in prices of petroleum products, people expect that their sacrifice would go for noble national cause. In this context, austerity measures by the government would go a long way in winning goodwill of common people.

Bulging food stock of around 60 million tonnes, which is expected to cross 75 millions tonnes during the next procurement season is turning into a big headache. No doubt, the government has initiated many steps to deplete the old stock-such as increased allotment under food for work programme, lowering of issue prices etc. Though allocation for BPL families has been raised to 35 kgs a month, this alone may not enable the BPL families-which by and large are daily wage earners, to have access to PDS. Instead of distribution on fortnightly basis (or weekly basis as in Kerala) there should be flexibility on distribution so as to enable poor wage

earners to purchase on daily basis. Probably, issue of food coupons may be a better proposition in this context.

I desire to repeat a suggestion which I had made earlier. Our country has gone in for liberalisation for the past one decade and more. We are now moving into second generation reforms. It is as it should be. But then the country has reached a stage, especially when it has moved into second generation reforms, it is absolutely necessary to make a thorough assessment of the impact of the first generation reforms, whether it has achieved its purpose, whether its impact has accelerated the growth and development of economy, whether any correctives in approach, in direction and in implementation are needed. These are all to be studied so as to keep the course of economy in the right direction. I feel the country and its economy need such an assessment. My suggestion therefore is to appoint a committee of competent persons to study this and submit its report without delay, say, within three to six months. This will enable the Government to assure itself that it is pursuing the reform process rightly and earnestly.

I wish to bring to the attention of the Government one more matter. The textile industry sector – Mill, Powerloom and Handloom together – is second only to agriculture in providing jobs to lakhs of families. Today this sector is afflicted with problems. Every one of these sections of Textile Industry cries for our attention. May be, some of their problems are creations of their own, some may be due to high competition from other countries and perhaps a few owing to governmental policies and lack of due attention or coordination. The sum total of the present situation is that the industry is in doldrums and needs special attention, as otherwise lakhs of families dependent on this are likely to be thrown into the streets. The Central Government has adopted and announced New Textile Policy. It is intended to help the industry and help in its restoration. I suggest to the Government to make coordinated efforts by healthy interaction between the ministries concerned like Textile Ministry, Finance Ministry, and Small Scale Industries Ministry etc. so that the entire industry gets restored to its health and once again stands on its own feet. This is most

essential as it is facing very stiff competition from foreign goods.

Friends,

The gruesome burning of innocent women and children in a train at Godhra, the suicide bomber attack on devotees at the Raghunath Temple in Jammu and several other recent incidents of mayhem perpetrated by the ISI sponsored terrorists are a clear message that there will be no let up in cross border terrorism. General Musharraf's unwillingness or inability to control the jihadi elements is quite evident. That his Jan 12 speech was merely a ploy to hoodwink the international community is now quite well established. He has refused to hand over Daniel Pearl's abductor to the US and has flatly rejected US advice to comply with the Indian demand for the twenty most wanted terrorists who have been given refuge in Pakistan. A large number of extremist elements arrested in Pakistan in January have been released. The jihadi groups continue to operate as before. Musharraf's duplicity is now quite apparent. Even some American political commentators have acknowledged this fact even though the US Government continues to repose faith in Musharraf's good intentions.

While it is obvious that Pakistan has no desire to live in peace and amity with India and that we have to learn to live with a hostile Pakistan for quite sometime, there is no dearth of over-optimistic, and perhaps misguided, elements who keep calling upon the Government of India to enter into a dialogue with Pakistan. As a former Prime Minister said recently, you cannot have a dialogue with a gun pointed at your head. We have no alternative but to deal firmly with cross border terrorism. We believe that our armed forces will have to remain constantly vigilant and the ISI network in the country must be exposed and thoroughly smashed.

Elsewhere, in our neighbourhood there have been some positive developments. The cease-fire agreement between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE has raised hopes of an eventual solution of the problem of the status of Tamils in Sri Lanka. We welcome this move and extend our best wishes to both sides in their efforts to bring about lasting peace in Sri Lanka.

The visit of the Nepalese Prime Minister, Shri Sher Bahadur Deuba provided an opportunity for further strengthening of Indo-Nepalese relations. His discussions with the Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and other Indian leaders have provided a framework for extensive and intensive interaction in a variety of spheres. The Nepalese Prime Minister has also been assured of all possible assistance in dealing with Maoist insurgents, who intend to overthrow the established order in the Himalayan Kingdom.

The External Affairs Minister Shri Jaswant Singh's visit to China earlier this month has paved the way for a structured and continuous dialogue with the People's Republic of China at different levels. China is an important neighbour of ours and we believe that a good understanding between India and China can contribute enormously to peace, security and economic development of the region.

Friends,

The country is passing through testing times. We have succeeded in providing a stable and progressive government at the centre along with our allies. The NDA is cohesive and is also a cooperative effort. Adherence to Common Agenda and full faith in the leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee are twin factors of successful functioning of NDA. These two factors can remain the inseparable bond that binds all our allies together so long as mutual trust, mutual confidence and mutual relationship remain intact under all circumstances. I would like to stress this aspect also and assure our allies that BJP has such a trust, confidence and relationship in the rest.

Friends,

Attempts are being made by opposition parties to destabilise us. We should be conscious of it. We must remember always that National Democratic Alliance has been promoted to provide for a good governance of the country on an agreed agenda. It must be our endeavour to strengthen this arrangement. NDA also is making an effort to carry more and more sections of people together for the betterment of the nation. This also should continue.

But in all this we who constitute BJP should ever remember that the strength of NDA depends upon the strength of the Party round which NDA has been built. So it is our responsibility to see that BJP becomes the strongest in every sense of the term. The recent electoral setback suffered by us need not dishearten us while on the other hand it should steel our resolve to succeed.

In Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Punjab we have lost an electoral battle. We must strengthen ourselves to win back these states. Newer challenges are there to be faced and won. Goa and Jammu and Kashmir are to go to polls this year. Next year (2003) will see ten of the states going to polls including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi etc. Let our preparations begin in right earnest now. Let us get ready electorally. Let us strengthen our party organisation. Let us endear ourselves by our work, by our performance and by our functioning as a cohesive body to the general public.

We might have lost a meter but we are here to win a kilometer. We might have lost the day. We are sure to win the year.

Let us therefore move ahead.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

24 March, 2001

Friends,

It is said that life is unpredictable. It is much more so in politics. By a strange twist of circumstances the smooth sailing ship of ours has been visited by a storm and I find myself to be entrusted with the responsibility of captaining the ship out of storm and steering it safely to the port.

When Tehelka.com tapes found their way into electronic media, an unfortunate and unsubstantiated situation got created necessitating our president Shri Bangaru Laxman to step down from the post of Party President. I am aware that a few persons in the party did feel that he should not have resigned. But then his resignation letter of 13.3.2001 addressed to me, which reached my hands by midnight that day, clearly stated - I quote, "I am ready to face a thorough enquiry into the matter which I am sure will clear my name. However, pending enquiry and in keeping with the high moral standards of the BJP I hereby offer to step down from the office of the President of the party. I have taken the decision after consulting the Prime Minister."

Under these circumstances the available office-bearers who met on the 14th had no other option but to accept the resignation and they asked me to shoulder the responsibility in his place. Being the senior most Vice-president of the Party I had to accept it for the party cannot afford to be headless. It is in these circumstances that you find me addressing this august house today from the Chair of the President.

The seat of President of our party is like Vikramaditya's *Sinhghasana*. We have been told that even a cowherd who occupied the place where the *Sinhghasana* lay buried, rendered justice in a phenomenal manner. This seat also has been similarly blessed by illustrious leaders starting from Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee, who was counted as one of the very few tallest leaders in our country on account of his intense patriotism, unalloyed nationalism, integrity and intelligence, and Pandit Deendayalji who was our friend, philosopher and guide. This seat has been adorned by such illustrious leaders as Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Shri Lal Krishna Advani and their successors. Although it may look a bit incongruous that, I, an ordinary *Karyakarta* of our party, have been brought up to this level; still it goes to strengthen the reputation that this party has acquired ever since its inception that this is a party of *Karyakartas*, or to put it in political terminology, a cadre based party. I have absolutely no hesitation to say that I will be quite at home with my new responsibility as I have grown with Shri Atalji, Shri Advaniji, Shri Kushabhau etc. and groomed by them for the past 35 years and more.

The very fact that you have entrusted the responsibility of Party Presidentship to me is proof positive that I enjoy your trust, confidence as well as your total cooperation in this great task of not only carrying this huge party of ours to its destined goal but also carrying the entire nation with us to its destined glory. I will be failing in my duty if I do not express my deep sense of gratitude and profound thanks to you for the unstinted support you have extended to me today and all these past years.

Friends, we have covered a long route ever since we started on our political journey. We can look back with satisfaction that our journey has been on the right path, in the right direction and under right leadership. We had our quota of obstacles, resistance, ridicule and rigorous opposition. We were reduced to simply two members in Parliament in 1984 and we are today 182, the largest single party. We were described as a party which was getting isolated in Indian politics till midway through 1980s and today we find that those who tried to isolate us have become isolated. Twenty years back when we founded BJP our objective was to emerge as an alternative to the then ruling party. But today our vision has been enlarged to see that 21st century becomes Bharat's Century. Our objective also has

become much more focussed and clear that it is our endeavour to see that India gets recognised as an Asian Power playing its due role in international community in the next few years. We will have to live up to this vision and objective.

We stand by our commitment to National Democratic Alliance. Its emergence is due to demand of time. BJP will go all out under the leadership of Shri Atalji to make it a success. BJP desires that all of us in NDA should adhere to the Dharma of coalition. I appeal to every one that as we have all pledged ourselves to be bound by a common accepted Agenda of governance on the basis of which we sought and got the mandate of the people, the same should be adhered to and no discordant voice should be heard from any quarter. When difference of opinion and moments of friction are found some times even within a party, it is not a matter of surprise that some such things are seen in multiparty associations like NDA. Mutual trust, mutual understanding and mutual adjustment and mutual friendship born out of these with ultimate objective of serving the best interests of the nation can provide the necessary lubricant to keep the NDA moving with frictionless smoothness.

Communists in the country have been functioning with their feet in the country and their head outside. Time and political tide have eroded their base in several parts of our country. Their bastions in West Bengal and Kerala are about to fall due to their own governmental follies, political irrelevance and organisational fissures. BJP is determined to see that both in Kerala and West Bengal the leftist government gets defeated at the hands of electorate in the forthcoming elections. Our strategy in those two states shall be to secure the twin objectives of ending Marxist rule so that the interest of the people of the states gets best served and seeking the best interest of our party.

We are also facing assembly elections in three other states of Tamilnadu, Pondicherry and Assam. Our state units in these two states of Tamilnadu and Pondicherry as part of alliance of NDA partners are entering into a mutually satisfactory understanding with their allies. We are confident that our alliance will succeed in these states by receiving the mandate of the people.

In Assam our state unit is going ahead to contest maximum number of seats which can well respond to our party's electoral call.

It is a very sensitive state and our electoral strategy should be such as to secure the best interests of Assam as well as our party. I am happy to note that our Assam unit is working on these lines.

Congress Party, the main opposition in our country, does not seem to have learnt the lesson, which the electorate of India taught them in the last mid term poll in 1999. The party which should function with a sense of responsibility as an opposition in a democracy has chosen to play a negative role both inside and outside Parliament. It has allowed itself to be overcome by despondency and hence has become desperate. Blind opposition, intense hatred for BJP, unbridled ambition for power, irresponsible leadership, which flouts with impunity democratic norms and traditions, have become hallmarks of Congress Party. BJP's total commitment to democracy is well known. Even as our country is a living democracy, our party is a practising democracy. Hence we are worried that the opposition party is not playing the role the democracy demands.

The hysterical reaction of that Party's President to the Tehelka.com allegations does not behove a responsible leader of a responsible opposition party. Allegations have been made and they are yet to be proved. The natural reaction and demand of that party and its President should be a thorough probe and to punish the persons whoever he or she may be, if found guilty. The democratic response to the situation ought to be a challenging debate in Parliament. This is what the country expected and this is what democrats in the country looked forward to. But a Democratic Party, true to fascist demand, says "We demand-you get out" – Has such a demand any place in democracy? Whenever a scam surfaced during Congress rule, the opposition placed the demand for a probe but the ruling Congress with its majority rejected it. But the NDA Government is ready for debate and probe and strangely the Congress rejects it. It says that Government should resign and then only probe is possible.

The law of the land says that none is guilty till he is found guilty through due process of law. Here under Congress rule of law it is just the reverse. Those whom they accuse are guilty and they should be punished. If we were to ask "Where is the proof?" they will turn round and say that the very fact they have been punished proves the guilt. It reminds me of a story, which I read years ago.

A person boasted that he had killed a tiger. People suspected his claim. They asked where exactly he had killed the tiger. He said he had killed it under a tree. Which is the place, they asked? He pointed to the tree and said that there was the standing proof.

Friends, I congratulate our Prime Minister and the NDA Government for having decided to go in for a thorough probe by a sitting or retired Supreme Court Judge. It is as it should be. BJP desires that every aspect of the Tehelka.com matter should be thoroughly probed and truth brought out. The guilty should be punished.

We were all greatly saddened and pained that a situation has arisen where Shri Bangaru Laxman had to submit his resignation. Our opponents have sought to create such a situation that doubt is sought to be created about the credibility of our leadership. Shri Bangaru Laxman true to the tradition of the party lost no time to respond to the situation by resigning his post of presidentship and has made himself available for an impartial enquiry. All of us look forward to the day which may be sooner than later to see that Shri Bangaru stands vindicated and found as an innocent victim caught in a web of conspiracy. I can assure that once he comes out of this *Agni Pariskha* and again his services become available, his services are sure to be utilised fully befitting his personality and in the best interests of the party.

Friends,

The government has gone in for second generation reforms. The budget has, contrary to expectations, been welcomed by all. There is bound to be some criticism from some quarters or other. This is natural, as no budget is perfect budget. Every budget has to take into account the ground realities of the year and the short term and long-term needs of the country. For the first time an attempt has been made to keep the long-term needs of the country in mind while framing the budget. We congratulate the government and the Finance Minister for his bold approach.

The reduction of interest rate for deposits by one and half percent investment although done to prod greater investment by a lower lending interest rate has caused some resentment among small depositors. In a democracy it becomes necessary for the government

to carry as large sections of people as possible with it. Hence our request to the government is to see whether the affected sections can in any manner be made to feel at ease with the budget proposals of the Government.

Friends,

We have overcome many an obstacle in our path of progress. We are yet to reach our Everest. We may face ordeals in our onward march. Tenzing Norgé had stated that it is the last 100 meters of his Everest climb that has been most difficult. Let us all bear this in mind. We will have to make NDA strong. For that it is imperative that we make BJP much stronger than what it is today.

We have faced many a crisis in our political journey. Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee's death within two years of founding of BJS, the midnight murder of Pt. Deendayalji when we were forging ahead, the Emergency we faced in 1975 whereby our leaders and tens of thousands of our cadre were thrown behind bars not knowing when they will come out, coming out of Janata Party and starting BJP from scratch and getting reduced to two in Lok Sabha in 1984 are some of the crises which we faced and surmounted with grit and determination. The recent Tehelka.com also is aimed at us to seriously damage our party. But with the inspiring leadership of Shri Atalji and other illustrious leaders of our party, with lakhs of our dedicated *Karyakartas* of our party and with the huge support we enjoy from the people of this country, I am sure we will come out of this ordeal very soon with our opponent vanquished. With faith in our cause, faith in ourselves, faith in our leadership and faith in our destined goal, let us together determine to carry our flag to every nook and corner of our country, to every section of our society and to every heart and hearth in the country.

Integrity in personal and public life, transparency in our organisational functioning, unity of purpose, of mind and of action, dedication to the cause with unswerving loyalty, a mission to make 21st century as Bharat's Century, a vision of integration of the entire Indian society-have long been the identity of our Party. Let us all realise it and bring it under sharper focus.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

27-29 July, 2001

Friends,

I am extremely happy to welcome you all to the meeting of our National Executive. We had decided to have it early next month in Amritsar-Punjab and our *Karyakartas* there had enthusiastically started to make necessary preparations for it. As very important social and religious festivals fell during the first fortnight of August and as we could not postpone our Executive till the end of August, we decided to have this meeting of ours in Delhi itself once again now. I have assured our Punjab unit that our National Executive will definitely consider having our next meeting in Amritsar in Punjab.

Friends, the monsoon session of the Parliament has commenced. Many of the pending bills are to come up for consideration. Many other important matters are sure to be raised for discussion and debate. It is as it should be. In a parliamentary democracy Parliament is the vital forum wherein the people's interests as well as people's concerns are freely and fully discussed. Government is called upon to justify every action and decision of it and opposition is entrusted with the responsibility of making the government realise this. People's expectation of the Parliament is only this. But unfortunately, this type of functioning of Parliament is totally disregarded of late. I do not want to recount what all happened during the last budget session. But it pained every lover of democracy; it caused agony to every thinking mind which wished well for Parliamentary democratic system and it created a type of

disenchantment for all towards the very political system itself when it was found that the people's representatives themselves threw away the only instrument through which they could bring government's omissions and commissions under sharp focus for the benefit of the people. It will ever remain a sad chapter in the pages of Parliamentary democracy that anger and accusation dominated over accountability of government's handling of public funds. We are even prepared to reluctantly acquiesce in the decision of opposition in stalling the proceedings of the House day after day, if the government of the day had refused to oblige the opposition with a demanded debate. But the reverse was the case. The government was fully prepared for a full and elaborate debate and the opposition spurned it.

I would not have resorted to recall what happened during the last session, but for the fact that we are in the midst of another session of Parliament. I fervently hope that the opposition as well as the government will agree to an orderly and purposeful session so that all important matters that are slated to come up before Parliament this time will be calmly and coolly discussed. Therein lies the success of parliamentary democracy and we owe it to our succeeding generations that we pass on this parliamentary democratic system in its best of health.

After our last Executive meeting assembly elections in the five states of Kerala, Tamilnadu, Pondichery, West Bengal and Assam took place. The Left Front was the major loser and it lost its power in Kerala. In West Bengal too it could have been cut to size but for the division in anti-establishment votes. More than Left Front winning the election, the opposition lost it. The surprise was in Tamilnadu but people's verdict must be respected. As the matter of assumption of power as Chief Minister by the leader of AIADMK is before the Supreme court, I do not want to comment upon it. But I am sure that a very clear cut decision will be delivered by the highest court of our land so that no body, whether a governor or a returning officer, shall err in future in such matters. In Assam the ruling party lost the election and the then main opposition has come to power. Time will prove whether the people of Assam have made the right choice. In all these five states wherever the BJP elected representatives are there, they will have to play the

role of constructive opposition with proper floor coordination with our friendly parties.

I will be failing in my responsibility if I do not draw the attention of the Executive on a matter which is very important not only to BJP but also to other allies in NDA. I must say and I do say with pride that NDA is becoming more and more cohesive with better and friendly understanding in running the government. I desire to take this opportunity to congratulate every one of our allied parties in NDA for their cooperation and constructive role.

But one or two developments in NDA especially when the five state assembly elections were on us need to be taken notice of. Two of our allies in NDA left us before the above state elections for reasons of their own. Their leaving did create an impression – however insignificant it may be – that by the desertion of the two, the stability of NDA came up for some discussion. Secondly, NDA as such did not provide any provocation whatsoever for these parties to leave. Thirdly, after achieving the purpose for which they left, they now appear to be desirous of returning to NDA. I feel none of the parties in NDA can enjoy a right to hurt NDA and then ask for benefits of NDA. Well, BJP is only a part of NDA although it provides the major part. I think it will be in the best interests of NDA both from short term and long term points of view if certain norms are formulated for entry or reentry of any party in NDA. I hope NDA as a whole will give due consideration to this suggestion of mine.

It will not be out of context if I refer to post election developments in Tamilnadu. Nobody questions the right of a state government to take legal action against any citizen irrespective of their status and stature, if there be basis for it. But living in civilized society and in a practising parliamentary democracy, the government is expected to go in for healthy standards so that even individuals are influenced to follow the same. Constitution may provide various freedoms to individual citizens but if the government of the day disregards the same with impunity where lies the remedy for the affected individuals? The paper on which the word sugar is written will not taste sweet. So also constitutional rights do not confer the rights unless the citizens are allowed to enjoy them. What happened in Tamilnadu? The manner in which

the former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu M. Karunanidhi was arrested and handled is something that has shocked the entire nation. Any amount of explanation cannot assuage the wounded feelings of the persons concerned. We would like to tell the AIADMK leadership that power should not blind them to throw all norms of expected decent behaviour to carry out their personal vendetta. Power should never be used as a cloak to humiliate a political opponent. None including the state or elected government has the right to challenge the human dignity of a citizen of the country as the human dignity is the very basis on which the collective dignity of the society itself is built.

I strongly condemn the entire handling of the matter by Tamilnadu government. The fact that the police officers had crossed all limits only goes to prove how subordinates will be tempted to behave to please the power that be, knowing its mind. There can be no excuse for any state government to arrest central ministers. If such things take place—Laloo in Bihar threatened to emulate Jayalalitha—there can be no orderly government in the country as none including chief ministers and Prime Minister can be safe in the country. Anarchy should never be allowed to creep in under any garb as it will be the very negation of civilized government. BJP should accept this type of challenge and we shall never allow the country to be plunged in this type of anarchy.

I am sure the Central Government also must be contemplating steps to see that such things do not recur anywhere in the country. Any centre of power violating the golden rule of humiliating human dignity should be made to face the consequences as that alone will be the requisite deterrent.

There have been unfortunate developments in Manipur. The situation arising there on the agreement to extend ceasefire is more due to misunderstanding and communication gap. The misunderstanding arose that the extension of ceasefire to other north eastern states would result in disturbing the territorial integrity of Manipur and a few other states. The government's clarification that the agreement does not in any manner affect the territorial integrity either now or in any future date came after mischief was done in Manipur where people's apprehensions were exploited to perpetrate violence. It would have been better if the

agreement itself had provided the necessary clarification. Once the mass mind takes over it is extremely difficult for reasoning and explanations to become effective. This is what one sees in Manipur. The Prime Minister as well as Home Minister have assured the people of Manipur and other states that there is no basis for their apprehension. I am sure the central government will be able to convince the people of Manipur and other states that their territorial integrity will remain intact not only for the present but in future also.

The recurring phenomenon of draught and floods is seen this year too. While certain parts of our country like Rajasthan and Gujarat all have borne the brunt of draught conditions, Orissa is again reeling under heavy rains and floods. I am sure the respective state governments will do their best in providing relief measures. I am equally sure that the central government also will ensure that relief measures will not suffer for want of central help. I also appeal to all the social and religious organisations which have always been in the forefront in providing relief to the affected people when any natural calamity afflicts the people, to come forward in ample measure in undertaking the relief activities supplementing the efforts of governmental agencies. It is needless for me to stress that our party units all over the country will come forward to extend their help to the Orissa unit in their relief activities.

Droughts, floods and cyclones visit us almost every year. There is therefore an imperative need to take such preventive steps that are necessary to lessen the fury of these and to keep the relief machinery alert. The natural calamities prone areas should be identified and necessary schemes drawn up and implemented so that colossal national loss of lives and properties is minimised and resultant human misery avoided. The central and state governments should speed up the setting up of commissions for natural calamities to attend to the task.

The Centre has been striving hard to improve the economy of the country. Many steps have been taken by the central government to keep the economy moving on the right track. Thanks to benevolent measures and management in agricultural sector we have been having good foodgrains production which has resulted in ever growing food stocks. A good number of schemes

to meet requirements of poorer sections of people, kisans, women etc. have been undertaken by the Government which have come in for great appreciation. When all these schemes get fully implemented, there is bound to be great improvement in the economic field and vulnerable sections of people are sure to secure better levels of living.

But there is a feeling that the change over from a deficit condition in foodgrains to a surplus one has brought about its own problems which one may call as problems of plenty. One such problem is huge stock on hand in government godowns and sufficient quantity in market. In these circumstances the kisan with stocks available with him does not find a market to sell his produce. Our kisans do not have capacity to keep their stocks under storage and wait for favourable time to dispose of. The government stock in hand also is overflowing and has no storage facilities if they go in for further procurement. Under these circumstances the brunt falls on kisan and he needs immediate relief. There will have to be free movement of foodgrains from one corner of the country to another and Essential Commodity Act will have to be suitably amended so that there can be free flow of foodgrains from one part of the country to another. The kisans need to be advised with regard to agricultural produce they should grow. To meet the deficit the country went in for quantitative production of food grains but now that the country has reached a surplus stage the agriculturists should receive guidance, encouragement and incentives to go for quality produce so that we will be able to improve our exports to compete with others successfully and to secure a brand name for our country.

Many of the schemes and assurances are yet to be fully implemented. There seems to be procedural delay in flow of allotted funds for centrally sponsored schemes. In the implementation of projects like rural connectivity and mini power projects especially in tribal and hilly, areas age old acts like Forest Act and environmental clearance come in the way. Reports also are that there is inadequate resource flow to the agricultural sector from banks specially NABARD due to procedural bottlenecks.

I am given to understand that special steps are needed to be undertaken to see that all central schemes get duly and properly

implemented. Whether in rural development sector, small scale sector or any other sector, there seems to be no mechanism available at present to monitor the implementation of these schemes. I feel this is a matter which needs to be given due attention and importance by the government. I have a suggestion to make. The central government in consultation and cooperation with state governments should evolve a monitoring mechanism at the central and state levels to see that all schemes are duly implemented and targeted sections of people do receive the benefit of these schemes. Whenever the next Chief Ministers meeting takes place the Prime Minister can appeal and persuade the states to cooperate in this matter. This will be a great step forward to make the people of the country feel that schemes are not intended to remain so but do get implemented to benefit them.

The government also should come forward to educate the people about various steps being taken by it to improve the lot of people. Ministries should bring out publications with regard to the programmes taken up by them for the improvement of economic standards of the people. These should be published in all languages and widely distributed. This will enable party men and public to better understand the steps that are being undertaken by the government. It is also necessary that the concerned ministers should extensively tour and periodically assess and monitor the implementation of various programmes and keep the people informed.

Our Prime Minister has been saying on number of occasions that party cadre should play an important role in this matter. Keeping that in view the party has started arranging periodical meetings with concerned ministers so that the party can get briefed about government activities.

We have categorically declared in our Chennai declaration that the government should be a facilitator and not a regulator. It is in keeping with this stand of ours that our government has deliberately decided to move away from a regulated economy to that of liberalisation which means a facilitated economy. It is a decade since the country has gone in for liberalisation. We are to further move ahead in the path of liberalisation. But then it will be prudent to take stock of the effect and impact of liberalisation

on the Indian economy during the past decade, identify weak points if any, apply correctives if needed and then formulate further steps to be taken towards the onward journey along the path of liberalisation. I feel that this type of objective assessment will enable us to keep to the right track.

The recent developments in our very friendly neighbouring country Nepal caused us all shock, agony and grief. What ought not to have happened and what people of Nepal never dreamt happened. The people of India naturally felt very much concerned with what happened in the Royal House of Nepal as both Nepal and India are bound by unbroken bond of culture, religion, history and social relationship. India wishes well and will always be ready to render whatever help it can so as to enable Nepal to emerge from the present trying times.

The focus of the world was on India nay Agra last week. Indo-Pak summit took place in Agra. Our Prime Minister while taking steps to strengthen our security requirements in a much better and effective manner than his predecessors has also been taking bold initiatives to bring peace to the region by taking steps to strengthen relationship with all our neighbouring countries including China. It is because of this effort of his government that we see improved relationship with our neighbours. Pakistan too is our neighbour and naturally Prime Minister's peace offensive was towards Pakistan too. His Lahore journey, his unilateral ceasefire in J& K, his invitation to Pak Chief to come to India for talks are all part of this initiative and naturally India has proved its bonafides in its efforts on arriving at peaceful settlement of all bilateral matters between India and Pakistan.

The Agra summit did not produce results as expected or as desired. None need feel sorry for it. Agra summit is not an end in itself and it is one of such attempts. Why should India fear to talk to Pakistan or talk to Pakistan with fear. India has proved time and again that none can browbeat or pressurise it either through armed strength or through economic measures. Bharat under NDA government under the able Prime Ministership of Shri Atalji is confident enough and capable enough to meet any kind of challenge from any quarter.

Agra brought out the statesman in Atal Bihari Vajpayee while

it brought out the soldier in Musharraf. If only Musharraf had realised that he had come to India as President of Pakistan and as such he had come to resolve all outstanding matters between his country and our country things could have taken a different turn in Agra. The manner in which he disregarded the host country's view and invited the Hurriat leaders for talks and had talks, the way in which he disregarded the diplomatic niceties and courtesies extended to him in Agra by converting an informal breakfast talk into a regular televised press conference only brings out the utter disregard and contempt he had for the role he was expected to play. Even as one can't succeed in hiding a pumpkin in a grain of cooked rice so also Pak cannot succeed in hiding the fact that it is the source and base of all cross-border terrorism. Parrot like repetition of Kashmir as the core issue does not impress anyone much more so the people of India.

Pak President must understand one thing clearly that India is a democratic country and Shri Vajpayee is the duly elected and acknowledged leader of India. There is an absolute national consensus on Kashmir in India and Musharraf must bear that in mind. Hence Vajpayee's rejection of Musharraf's unifocal agenda is the rejection of the entire Cabinet and entire country.

Pakistan will do well to remember that the Indian Parliament as true representative of people of India had unanimously passed a resolution of indivisibility of J & K and India and that the entire area of J&K is inalienable part of India.

India has spoken through that resolution. It is India that decided and that will continue to decide the present and future of every part of India including J& K and none others can claim any right on the basis of religion or otherwise to demand any separate status for the portion they live in. If Pakistan understands this it will be better for its future relationship with India.

Diplomatic courtesies and diplomatic niceties are essential parts of foreign relationship and India has always upheld it. But when the other side deliberately flouts it to secure some momentary self interests it becomes necessary for us also to take counter steps to take care of our interests even while observing such courtesies and niceties. This is the lesson of Agra which we should remember.

We all greatly appreciate the peace initiatives taken by our

PM by arranging the Agra summit. The PM has also taken the right step in accepting an invitation for return visit to Pakistan for talks. Our congratulations to Shri Vajpayeeji for the firm stand taken during the one to one talks and for making the President of Pakistan understand that not only J& K but the entire Indo-Pak relationship should be looked at from altogether different perspective.

Friends,

I have been touring with the object of meeting our workers. I could visit a few states. I find great enthusiasm in our workers. Wherever I went I could see the enthusiastic public participation in our public programmes. We need to step up our efforts. We have enormous number of primary members. Unless we go in for proper motivation and training and unless they move towards their objective it cannot convert itself into strength. We must bring in more and more of our primary members to actively participate in our organisational activities. This cannot be done unless there is constant interaction between leadership and our members. I appeal to all our office-bearers from central level to lowest level to constantly tour respective areas, interact with our workers, convey the message of our party, educate the workers and through them the people about the performance of our government and seek their cooperation to make India strong and peaceful.

This is the task before us and let everyone of us realise these responsibilities and put our shoulders to the wheel.

I would like to conclude with a quotable quote from world renowned scholar historian Arnold Toynbee. In his address to Edinburg University in 1952 he predicted that in the twenty first century it is possible that India, the conquered will conquer its conquerors. We have in our Chennai declaration resolved to make 21st century Bharat's century. Keeping these in mind it is up to us to realise this resolve of ours at the earliest possible date.

Vande Mataram!

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National Executive

Amritsar

2-3 November, 2001

Friends,

I welcome you all in this holy city of Amritsar for our National Executive Meeting. This meeting ought to have been held in this city last time itself; but as you know we had to meet in Delhi due to unavoidable circumstances. The Punjab Unit insisted that it should be given an opportunity to host this meeting. I thank the Punjab Unit for the excellent arrangements they have made for this 2-day meet.

Amritsar City is not only a historic city but also it is one of the most important spiritual and cultural centres of India. It has a long and cherished history shared by us all. It is because of this reason also this meeting has assumed significance.

Bharatiya Janata Party and the Akali Dal share power in Punjab. Akali Dal itself could have formed the Ministry on its own strength. But, as we have a long-standing alliance and contested elections together, the Akali Dal insisted that we should share power with them. Our relationship with Akali Dal is quite good and with due understanding and accommodation, I am sure, our alliance will accept and meet the electoral challenge successfully.

Friends,

There is a war in our region. There has been a dramatic change in the international scene and in our neighbourhood. All of us know that the attack on America by terrorist group on 11 September

proved to be a Black Day for America as on that day, terrorist-hijackers dashed their planes on the twin Trade Centres of New York and Pentagon in Washington. A few thousand lives were lost. More than the loss of lives and properties, American people and government felt that the terrorists have challenged their invincibility and inviolability. Till then America did not pay much attention to recognise terrorism that was taking place in different parts of the world and much more so in India in general and Jammu & Kashmir in particular. As the strike of international terrorism against America provoked America to launch war against international terrorism, President Bush declared war on terrorism and most of the democratic countries in the world have extended their support to US efforts to combat international terrorism. Military action against Taliban and efforts to hound out Bin Laden are in full swing in Afghanistan.

We have to accept the challenge of terrorists and there is no other way but to fight it out. What is happening in Kashmir; what has happened in Mumbai and other places in India; what happened in New York and Washington can happen anywhere in the world. No civilized country will be left out. If civilization has to be saved from the perils of terrorism, mankind will have to come together and face it boldly. Our NDA Government under the Prime Ministership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee recognised this clearly and hence extended its full cooperation in this fight against terrorism.

Terrorism cannot be compartmentalised in life. It is total and it has to be totally eliminated. The situation has now come - not to separate terrorist attack on America from the terrorist attack in Jammu & Kashmir or anywhere in India or anywhere in the world - terrorism should be eliminated from the world. Bharatiya Janata Party would like every country to realise this and formulate its cooperation to the total elimination of terrorism from the soil of the earth. We do understand the anxiety of America to punish Bin Laden who is enjoying the protection and patronage of Taliban by its military action. But America should remember that elimination of terrorism merely of Taliban in Afghanistan will not provide the desired result if it does not come forward to cooperate with India and other countries in rooting out the menace of terrorism

from other parts of the world also. International terrorism has spread its tentacles to many countries and it will try to wreck its vengeance against America and other countries from some other operational base. Bharatiya Janata Party appeals to all countries who have come forward to cooperate in this great task of fighting out the ruthless terrorism that the efforts towards this task should be total and not to spare any terrorist outfit anywhere in the world.

India has been facing terrorist attacks in different parts of the country as well as in Jammu & Kashmir. We have been fighting this evil for over a decade and will continue till we eliminate every trace of terrorism. On 11 September the world has joined in condemnation of terrorism. We leave it to the world whether it is going to join our efforts in eliminating terrorism through out and we hope they will realise the gravity of the situation and would not withhold their cooperation. But for any reason the cooperation extended by other countries to America's efforts to root out terrorism in the form of Taliban in Afghanistan, is not extended to our efforts. I am sure, it will not in any manner deter us from successfully pursuing our efforts to eliminate terrorism.

Elimination of terrorism is not the job of the Government alone. Our NDA Government under the prime ministership of Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee is determined to carry on its efforts to eliminate terrorism. Our Security forces are playing a great role in this direction. Government and Security forces alone, unless they have the full backing of the nation, cannot succeed in their efforts. The terrorist challenge is a challenge to the entire country and as such, the entire nation accepts this challenge and shall fully back the efforts of the Government in its fight against terrorism. I make a special appeal to the opposition parties not to allow party or partisan interests to come in the way of fighting out the challenge posed by the terrorists. In a democracy we can afford to have different views. But when time comes, when the national security is under threat, all should close our ranks and extend unstinted support to all the efforts of the Government of the day and no difference should be allowed to come in the way of securing and safeguarding the security of the nation.

In this context, the role of Pakistan and more so of President Musharraf is not as is expected of them. 11 September

developments and compulsion of circumstances, made Pakistan to extend cooperation to America in its war-efforts against Taliban in Afghanistan. Naturally it appears to be a balancing act in Pakistan's efforts to scrape through the situation, as the world knows that Pakistan has been helping and abetting Taliban and its terrorists. It is strange that President Musharraf is trying to doublespeak when he brands cross border terrorism as freedom struggle and on the other admits terrorism in Afghanistan. His efforts to take public opinion in the world for a ride may not succeed. Terrorism is terrorism pure and simple. If Pakistan is sincere and serious in its cooperation to the world community, in its efforts to eliminate terrorism Pakistan would do well to stop cross border terrorism from its soil. India had made it clear that it is prepared to have talks with Pakistan on all issues including Kashmir provided necessary peaceful climate is created. How can Pakistan expect, or for that matter, any country in the world expect India to respond to the request that dialogue should continue between India and Pakistan when Pakistan actively promotes cross border terrorism in the territory of India. President Musharraf and Pakistan must shed their claws of terrorism first and then they will find India extending its hand of friendship to Pakistan.

We have repeatedly stated that India is for building up friendly relationship with our neighbouring countries. In a similar manner, we expect our neighbouring countries also to reciprocate in a positive manner. Our Central Government has been building up very good relationship with our neighbouring country, Bangladesh. Bangladesh went to polls recently and there is a change of Government there. BJP extends its greetings to the new Prime Minister of that country and hopes that under her leadership the relations between India and Bangladesh will further improve. But the recent developments in that country after the new Government assumed office cause great concern in view of the news that Hindus have been harassed and once again the flow of refugees from Bangladesh has started. India is facing already great problem of infiltrators from Bangladesh and that more than a crore of Bangladeshis as illegal entrants have created an imbalance in social, economic and demographic life of our

Eastern and North-Eastern states. It is natural that our Government also has expressed its deep concern over this. Inflow of refugees from Bangladesh should stop. BJP sincerely hopes that the new Government in Bangladesh would take necessary steps in that direction.

Our preparations for Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir assembly elections are on. We are to ensure that the respective state units have geared up their organisational machinery to take up the challenge. Each one of the State assembly elections is important in its own way for us. Alongwith these assembly elections Delhi Municipal Corporation elections are also to be held round about this time, and also urban local body elections in Maharashtra. I appeal to the *karyakarthis* of all these states that they should leave no stone unturned in securing success for our party.

Tamilnadu had local body elections. I congratulate the Tamilnadu unit for the success it has secured.

Friends,

In our last Executive meeting, in the course of my inaugural address I had made a suggestion to the Government that many of its well-thought-out schemes to benefit the poor are not getting actually implemented at ground level for want of a monitoring mechanism. In our economic resolution also we had brought out this point. I am greatly heartened that the Government took this suggestion of ours into consideration and our beloved Prime Minister, in his Independence Day address made at Red Fort, announced that the coming year would be 'year of implementation'. This clearly shows that our Government at the Centre is a responsive one, responsive to suggestions. Again we requested the ministries to bring out publications so that the people can be informed about the various welfare schemes of the Government. I am glad to acknowledge that some of the Ministries have come out with such publications. This will help people to understand the concern of the Government about their problems and also various steps the Government is taking to alleviate the conditions of various sections of people. It is the responsibility of the workers of our party to make people aware, with the help of these publications, of the

various beneficial schemes of the Government, so that people at large will be able to know how to get things done.

In this connection, I would like to make a specific reference to the various Governments running the states in the present constitutional federal set up. The states will have to fully cooperate in the implementation of all the poverty removal and employment generating welfare schemes of the Central Government. No doubt, state governments are extending their cooperation. Situation demands that there should be dynamic cooperation and coordination so that the central schemes can be totally implemented as quickly and as effectively as possible. For this the interaction between various ministries in the central government, especially economic ministries of the central government, and concerned ministries in the states, is to be tuned up, so that an effective monitoring system can get evolved by the centre and state governments together.

I desire to bring to the attention of the government the state of mind and the state of plight of the labour in general. BJP has no trade union of its own, because it believes that the trade unions should be independent and not politically oriented. But BJP has the interest of the labour at its heart. When the country is moving away from a state controlled economy to liberalised economy, there is bound to be some problems. As a result of the economic reforms that are being pursued by this government labour reforms also have become very necessary. It is in this connection that amendment is sought to be made in the Industrial Disputes Act and Contract Laws. The amendment should be made in such a manner that would help in accelerating economic activities through enhanced investment flow. We should also increase employment opportunities. I do not think anyone would dispute that these steps are very much in need in the interest of millions of youth who are anxiously waiting for an opportunity to earn their livelihood. This attempt of government to amend the above acts should not be viewed as something against the interests of labour. I earnestly appeal to all political parties and trade unions to cooperate with the Government in this effort so that political difference does not interfere with the interests of unemployed youth.

But, at the same time, I would like to suggest to the government that along with this amendment, the government should also expedite implementation of social safety net measures to protect the interest of workers. The labour also must get assured that when they are expected to play a role of protecting and preserving national interest, their interest also gets protected. The labour plays a very important role in the economic activities of our country in promoting its economic interest. Keeping this in mind, I appeal to the government to sincerely consider the enhancement in compensation from 15 days' to 45 days' salary against each year's service and National Renewal fund to rehabilitate the affected workers. I would like to make one more suggestion in this context. I appeal to the government to extend the benefits of insurance coverage to the private sector workers in the same way as the PSU workers. Dialogue and communication with labour and a part of the government is no doubt being carried on but there is scope for further improvement, so that the communication gap can get minimised.

The government deserves congrats for its decision to initiate housing schemes namely *Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojna* worth Rs.2000 crore essentially for the benefit of urban poor with 50% Central Government. This will naturally help to revive industries such as steel and cement and also help in enhancing employment opportunities. I wish to venture to suggest to the Government that an integrated approach needs to be taken so that policy intentions could be translated into reality at the earliest. In this context, therefore, I request the Government to seriously consider the need for:

1. setting up specialised courts to handle all land title disputes;
2. simplifying and improvising ground registration system for land titles;
3. lowering the stamp duty thus minimising tax evasion and reducing cost assured possession of dwelling units; and
4. removing all hurdles in conversion of the so called agricultural land where there is no cultivation taking place in those lands, which is seen in places like Delhi.

The recent step by Reserve Bank of India to reduce bank rate would no doubt help in meeting investment flow through cheaper borrowing and thereby reviving the economy. Lower rates of interest on lending would also mean lower interest rates for savings. We understand the hardships of those persons who depend upon the interest they get from their savings; but to speed up economic growth, this trend becomes inevitable.

One more suggestion I offer for the consideration of the government:

When interest rates are lower, it has automatically become applicable even for the savings accounts already in operation. But, with regard to the already committed borrowings, the old rates of interest should continue even after lowering of lending rates of interest. I request the government to bring these anomalies to the notice of RBI so that the question of parity in approach for both lending and savings could sincerely be examined.

The next meeting of the World Trade Organisations is taking place at Doha. I am sure, the government will stick to its decision of not allowing any new issues for discussion without resolving first the implementation programmes. I earnestly appeal to the government that for the anomalies in the present set up specially the ones that adversely affect our farmers and small sector should be rectified at Doha.

Friends,

We observed commencement of *Swarna Jayanthi* of our *Raj Niti Yatra* on 21st Oct this year by calling a special session of our National Council. It was a very successful session. We have formed a Celebration Committee under the leadership of our Prime Minister. It will decide the nature of programmes that can be carried out. The manner and the objective of our *Swarna Jayanthi* Celebrations should be to reach out every nook and corner of the country, every small and tiny section of our society not only to carry the message of our party but also to carry the achievements and plans and schemes of our NDA Government. This year should enable us to broadbase our organisational, social and electoral support. This occasion should also be used to bring all those veterans who have done their best in life to help and enable us to reach

together the present position in our political journey. This Committee I hope will give necessary guidelines in this regard.

Friends,

I have been moving about and meeting our workers everywhere. We have gone in for a programme for Central leaders meeting the mandal level workers in a day. We have nearly covered 250 districts in the country and we will complete the rest before the end of November. A feedback is quite interesting and educative. These programmes have been welcome by all concerned and this has helped to renew a direct contact of central leaders with mandal level workers. My desire is that the state leaders and district leaders should, in similar manner, hold mandal *baithaks*, *sthania samiti baithaks* in the coming few months. This will greatly enable us to build up the necessary closeness and communication that has been the hallmark of our organisation all through.

The efforts of our leaders and our *karyakarthis* all through have enabled us to reach a position that we occupy today in Indian politics. We will have to strive hard further not only to retain this position but also to reach the peak and the peak is providing leadership to the entire nation in the overall national interests. It is our responsibility to build up such a well organised political strength on the basis of our hard service, devotion, dedication and discipline and it is only through this that we will be able to achieve the goal we have set for ourselves in our Chennai Declaration that 21st century shall be Bharat's Century.

Thank you!



National Executive

New Delhi

29 December, 2001

Dear Friends,

When we met in Amritsar on 2-3 November, we felt that we should meet again after elections in UP, Uttaranchal, Punjab etc. But what happened in the second week of December in Parliament complex, has necessitated calling this special meeting in Delhi. This might have inconvenienced some of our members as I know they had planned their party programmes on this date. Many of you had to cancel the programmes and rush here for this meeting.

All of us know what happened on 13 December in Parliament complex. Government has been warning the nation that terrorists may turn their attention to India and that there was a plan to mount an attack on Parliament. Government had taken precautionary steps and this proved very effective on 13 December and the terrorists, attempt to enter Parliament was foiled successfully and they were made to pay with their lives. Our security arrangements proved to be very effective in thwarting the danger. With all the technological and scientific advancement in surveillance and security safeguards, the terrorists succeeded in their attack in New York and Washington; but our security forces laying down their lives succeeded in frustrating the attempts of the terrorists and saved not only the Parliament and what all it stands for but also prevented elimination of the political leadership of our country.

It is but natural that the entire nation is angry at this type of affront to the nation. Remarkable response of the people in rallying together to support the efforts of the Government taken

to eliminate the terrorism is something unique in this country. As a nation we never failed to rise as one man whenever a challenge was posed to its freedom, security and sovereignty. Both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister reflected this mood of the nation in their statements. The Government rightly pursued the diplomatic path to make Pakistan understand its duty and responsibility at this juncture to take stern action against terrorists and their groups operating from the soil of Pakistan, while at the same time taking such steps that are necessary to guard against attacks from Pakistani soil. The steps taken so far by our Government have the full support of the nation and it is but natural that the people expect many more such steps to make Pakistan realise that if it were to join the international effort to fight against terrorism it cannot dilute it by its support to terrorism from its soil. I feel we have a Government, which not only is responsive to the expectations of the nation but also a very responsible one. It must be left to the Government to take such actions that are necessary to fulfil its commitment that they shall not allow terrorism to operate against India. I can assure the Government that not only the Party but also the entire nation is totally behind the efforts of the Government towards this end.

Friends,

We are almost near the end of this first year of this 21st century. The New Year is about to dawn. We will have to take stock of what all happened and what all we could achieve during the entire period of one year. We are also to plan for the next year. We have passed through, as a party and as people of this country, trying times. But at the end of this year when we take stock of the entire year, we could feel that we have done some good in certain matters if not in all things that were planned. We have progressed at least a mile if not miles. We have stuck to our path and not swerved from it.

Our Government has become much more cohesive and much more effective. Economy is moving ahead but not fast enough. The reasons are not our own creations. Our economy has become much more closer to the world economy and whatever happens at one end of the globe is affecting our economy also. In today's

global village we are yet to find insulatory arrangements for our economy so that outside factors leave the least impact on our economy. When there is the impact of world economy on our economy, thanks to the steps taken by our Government, our economy has withstood the pressures and shocks and has kept to its course. The country looks forward to the next year's budget when we hope that further impetus will be given to our economy.

Much of our industrial products and general economy depends upon the cost of production of our agricultural produce. In the present set up and circumstances when the Finance Minister has stated that the coming Budget will have its focus on agriculture, will it be difficult for the Government to find out ways and means by which the cost of production of our agricultural products can be brought down? This will in turn bring down the cost of production of industrial products dependent upon agricultural products and also the cost of living index. If the cost of living index is brought down, the need for the increased dearness allowance will no longer be there and the country can gain. Keeping this in mind, I would like to moot a suggestion to the Central Government to consider whether it will be beyond the means of the Government to remove the taxes and other levies on agricultural inputs and implements, so that the agriculture as a whole will benefit with its cost of production going down. The loss of revenue to Central and State Governments can be made up by dearness allowance payment not going up but going down. I hope the Government will give due consideration to this.

The cheapest mode of travel in India today is Railways. We are due for new Railway Budget. Railways even today carry bulk of people and bulk of our goods across the country at cheap rates. If more attention is paid in the coming Railway Budget to making train travel and goods carriage not only competitive but also consumer-oriented, it will help the poorer sections of people and movement of goods comparatively cheap.

Friends,

We are stepping into the second year of this new century in the next few days. Let us all resolve to leave the bitter memories of last year and look forward to a much better year. Let us all

resolve to keep the country united. Let us further resolve to make every citizen realise that he belongs to a larger entity namely the nation or society rather than belonging to a smaller entity of regional, linguistic, caste or religious group. Let us resolve by our own efforts of party workers and as the force behind the Government of the day, to see that the country has a good governance with the assured security and progressive economy. Let us be more conscious that we are a mighty nation of 100 crores of unified and disciplined people rather than a country populated with 100 crores of citizens. Let us all march towards making Bharat move towards building up a strong powerful self-sufficient, self-reliant, mighty country holding its own position in the comity of nations.

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Presidential Speeches
SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN

National Executive

New Delhi

4-5 January, 2001

Friends,

I wish you all a happy and prosperous 2001.

I am confident that in the New Year India will rise to greater heights in every sphere of activity and move even faster in the path of all round development under the able leadership of our beloved Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. I am sure that in the New Year, our Party will further expand its base and consolidate the gains that we made during the last year.

We must Consolidate Our Gains

Last year, our call to the Minorities, Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs – the sections of our society that have hitherto been lukewarm towards us – has yielded remarkable results. We have been, to a large extent, able to successfully bridge the gap that existed between these sections and our Party. Our efforts to combat the false and vicious propaganda by our political opponents that separated these sections and us have been fruitful. We have been able to remove the longstanding misconceptions in their minds about us. The response of these sections to our call has been overwhelming. Those who were unwilling to listen to us in the past are today prepared to enter into a dialogue with us. Thousands of persons from these sections across the country have come closer to us. Several of them have joined the Party and are ready to actively work for its expansion and growth. This is a significant development. In the New Year we need to redouble our efforts to consolidate these gains. We need to take every measure to involve these sections in

carrying out our programmes. Above all, we must generate among them a sense of belonging towards our party. I am confident that in the New Year we will make rapid progress towards realizing our goal of making our party the microcosm of Bharat. In these two days I want you to apply yourselves to designing appropriate programmes and strategies to be carried out by our *Karyakartas* at all levels.

The performance of the NDA Government, ably led by our beloved Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has proved that BJP is a party of governance. Our government is in the process of implementing the National Agenda of Governance. Attempts were made to throw spanners in this process by raising the question of Ayodhya. They could not succeed. The Prime Minister has clearly spelt out the policy of the Government. In view of this, I am confident that our partners in the NDA will carry on the good work conforming to the *Coalition Dharma* to which we are committed.

Prime Minister's Cease-fire Initiative

The Prime Minister's Cease Fire initiative has achieved initial success. It has inaugurated a new era in our continuing efforts to bring peace to Kashmir. The party fully stands by this initiative of the Prime Minister. The initiative has exposed the militant outfits that are perpetrating violence in the State and, their sponsor, Pakistan for what they indeed are – terrorists who have nothing but 'hate India' as their ideology. The incidents of violence by these forces only betray their panic at the success of the initiative. Their isolation from the local population and the resulting frustration prompt them to desperate attempts to subvert the initiative.

Apart from cross-border terrorism, fundamentalist terrorism is active throughout the country. Here our duty lies in being vigilant and in exposing their designs to disrupt the harmony in the society.

Economic Reforms

The government is pursuing economic reforms while adequately protecting the interests of the weaker sections of the society. The launch of the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* and *Antyodaya Anna Yojana* is a major initiative that proves the pro-

village and pro-poor orientation of the Government. Here I wish to refer to the plight of the Small Industries and the farmers. I am sure that the government will take adequate measures to ensure that this vital section of the society is taken care of. The NDA agenda envisages a steady growth in agricultural production and today we are already facing the problem of storage and warehousing. It is imperative that adequate attention is given to creating infrastructure for storing, exporting and using the foodgrains for the hungry, the poor and the unemployed. I may also mention the unrestricted flow of cheap Chinese goods, which are being dumped in this country. I am sure that the government shares the concern with everybody else and adequate measures are being taken.

Situation in Assam

The situation in Assam is alarming and is deteriorating day by day. People in the state, especially the Hindi-speaking population, are living in constant fear of death. In the last two months, more than a hundred people were killed by the militants. The government has failed miserably in discharging its fundamental duty of protecting the lives of the citizens. The militants in the state have a free run. The state government has proved its incapacity to arrest their activities. The state is crying for change. We give a pledge to the people of Assam. Our pledge is that we will restore peace to the state, and give good governance to the people of the state. We have a duty in Assam. Our duty is to redeem our pledge. We must tighten our belts and make every effort to win the forthcoming Assembly elections to redeem our pledge.

The situation in the adjoining Manipur and Tripura is equally grave. Lawlessness is the order of the day. In Tripura, the militants kidnapped five RSS workers sixteen months ago. The state Govt. has failed to rescue them.

The recent incidents of violence against the Indian Community in Nepal are a cause of grave concern. It is clear that this is a deliberate attempt to disrupt the harmonious relations between Bharat and Nepal. I suspect that this is a conspiracy to cause harm to the interests of both Bharat and Nepal. I urge the Govt. of Nepal to take effective steps to protect the lives and

property of the affected people and to investigate and expose the faces behind this trouble.

Forthcoming Elections to the State Assemblies

In these two days, we have to apply our minds to the task of preparing the party organisation to face the elections to the State Assemblies of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, West Bengal, and Assam. We have to analyze the political situation and put together effective strategies for these states. Where necessary, we have to begin the exercise of identifying potential allies. In the states that are going to polls we have immense opportunities to increase our strength substantially, and in some states, we can even bid for power either on our own or along with our allies and friendly Parties. The morale of the party workers must to be kept high so that they could face the challenge effectively. From now onwards we have to redouble our efforts.

An era of change has already been ushered in. The performance of the Government led by Atalji has given rise to higher expectations among the people. The Govt. and the party ought to meet these expectations with positive performance. Today, the priorities of the Nation are determined by the imperatives of good governance and development. That is our pledge to the people, which has to be redeemed. Let us, therefore, rise above controversies and contentions. Let us build up a consensus and dedicate the next ten years to total development as envisaged by the Prime Minister. Let the party be the true arbiter of the people's causes. Let us work for taking the fruits of governance and development to the people. Let us involve the people in the process of development and change. Party activism should help us identify the ills and sore spots and bring succour to the needy. An activist party instrument serves as an expression both of the popular will and popular participation. I extend my warm good wishes and active support to all of you in this lofty mission.

Vande Mataram!

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National Council

Nagpur

27-28 August, 2000

It is with a deep sense of honour that I stand before you today. I have no words to express my gratitude to all of you for electing me the Fifth President of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The recognition and the responsibility that you have conferred on me overwhelm me.

I know, however, that the recognition belongs not to me, but to this great Party. That the Party decided to elect an ordinary *karyakarta* like me for this high office shows the greatness and the distinctive character of the BJP. Indeed, each of my illustrious predecessors also began their political and public life as *karyakartas*.

This demonstrates that ours is a Party of *karyakartas*. I come from an ordinary dalit family. In our Party, social background of a person is no bar or hindrance for entrusting him or her with a responsibility. There is yet another message. A humble *karyakarta* is progressively shaped and prepared to take on bigger and higher responsibilities in the Party. The leadership of this Party is not preserved and reserved for members of a dynasty who think that it is their birthright to lead their Party and the Nation. The Bharatiya Janata Party, as our name itself proclaims, is a Party of and for the people of India.

My Illustrious Predecessors

I am acutely aware of the calibre, and stature of the lineage of Party Presidents. The founding President of this Party is our beloved leader Shri Atalji, who is now the beloved Prime Minister of our country. His deep wisdom, vast knowledge and experience,

loving and caring nature, the respect he commands as the tallest leader in the country today, and the prestige he enjoys as a statesman in the international arena have always been the greatest asset of our Party.

Under the charismatic and dynamic leadership of Shri Advaniji, the Party has risen phoenix-like and soared higher and higher. There is no parallel in India to the phenomenon of a political Party, which, having been reduced to a near non-entity in the Indian Parliament in 1984 became the largest single Party in 1996 and then went on to become the leader of a ruling coalition in the elections both in 1998 and in 1999. Shri Advaniji's moral authority and his guidance in ideological, political, and organizational matters have always been a source of strength and inspiration for our Party.

Today, I also acknowledge my gratitude to Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi and my immediate predecessor, Shri Kushabhau Thakre. Dr. Joshi's intellect and scholarship and Shri Thakre's rich experience in organisation building have both made a major contribution to the growth of the Party.

It will be my sincere endeavour to be a worthy successor to the four great men who have served as Party Presidents in the past. I need their blessings, constant guidance, and cooperation to discharge my onerous responsibility. I am confident that I will get these in full measure.

I am fully aware of the significant contribution made by the other senior as well as younger leaders of the Party. I seek their cooperation and counsel in my work as Party President for the next three years. I am equally confident that I shall receive the fullest cooperation from all my other colleagues and *karyakartas* at the Centre and in the States.

Finally, I seek the blessings and guidance of the Almighty God to serve my Motherland in my new capacity as the President of the party that is most committed to regaining the greatness and glory of Bharat Varsh.

Two Guiding Lights of our Party

Today, I pay my respectful homage to the memory of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. Time

will move on and generations will pass. However, our gratitude to these two leaders will remain undimmed. The BJP's ideological and political journey began with the formation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951. Dr. Mookerjee did not live long after founding the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. But his flaming nationalism, the character and integrity of his personality, and his courage to struggle for the Party's principles ensured that all of us belong to a Party with a difference and a political tradition with a difference. We are proud to celebrate the centenary of Dr. Mookerjee's birth this year.

The lustre of this distinctive tradition grew immensely under the leadership of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. His thesis of "Integral Humanism" was an original and weighty contribution to the development of political thought in India. So profound and powerful is the vision presented in the thesis that it will continue to serve as the guiding light for our Party in the new century.

My own political life began with the Jana Sangh. Ours was a small party, but our influence on India's political life was hardly small. This was thanks to the greatness of our leadership. Deendayalji inspired thousands of young men, including myself, to join political life with a nationalist mission. We did see how even our leaders had to live a hard life, without any of the facilities that even ordinary political activists take for granted these days. Old-timers have seen even Deendayalji and Atalji travel from place to place in Delhi on bicycles.

However, the lack of material resources was more than made up by the resources of idealism and ideology that inspired us in our youth. "*Rashtraya swaha, Rashtraya idam na mama*" (I offer everything of mine to this nation. Now everything is the nation's, not mine) was the thought that propelled our workers and leaders, instilling in them discipline, loyalty, comradeship, and cohesiveness of a very high order.

The BJP today is an heir to this hoary tradition. What we have gained today is because of the tradition we established in the formative years of our Party. It is our foremost responsibility to carry forward this precious tradition of the BJP as "a party with a difference" in today's new and expansionary phase of its evolution. I will return to this issue later in my address.

Nagpur: The Confluence of three Great Men

The choice of Nagpur for holding this session of the Party's National Council is pregnant with symbolism and significance. It is the point of confluence of three great visionaries of modern India: Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, and Dr. KB Hedgewar.

In December 1920, the All-India Congress Committee held its annual session in Nagpur. Gandhiji got adopted a new Party Constitution, which was authored by himself, and which set "attainment of Swaraj by all legitimate and peaceful means" as the goal of the Congress. He subsequently used to visit this city frequently on his way to Wardha, which was the laboratory for many of his experiments in constructive social and economic development.

The Nagpur session of the AICC was also the high point of Dr. Hedgewar's brief stint in political life. As the head of the provincial unit of the Congress Party, he was in-charge of organizing the logistics of the session. As we all know, after quitting politics, Dr. Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in 1925 in Nagpur and made it its headquarters. Since then, the RSS has been the fountainhead of nationalist thought and action all over the country. I too, was initiated into nationalist activities at the age of twelve after being exposed to the RSS in my native city of Hyderabad.

Nagpur is also the *karmabhoomi* and *dikshabhoomi* of the greatest social reformer of modern India, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. It was in this city in October 1956 that Dr. Ambedkar, along with tens of thousands of his followers, embraced Buddhism. This was his last major act before he passed away two months later.

The three personalities - Gandhiji, Ambedkar, and Hedgewar - may outwardly seem to belong to three conflicting ideologies and socio-political traditions. The BJP, however, is proud to acknowledge the signal contribution of all these three great men in the making of modern India. We believe that, not only is there no contradiction and conflict between their respective beliefs and actions, but there is, indeed a deeper convergence of their ideals.

In their own different ways, they struggled for the rejuvenation of this ancient and once-glorious society that had fallen on bad times, become weak, enslaved, and a prey to chronic social ills.

Nationalism was the fire that burnt in all these three hearts. All these three, by following their own different paths, strove for reforming the Hindu society, in the larger cultural and civilizational sense of the term “Hindu”. This is clear even from Dr. Ambedkar’s own explanation of the reasons for his *Diksha* to Buddhism.

The BJP is proud to pay tribute to these three great men, and to harmonize their legacies in today’s times. Indeed, we are the only Party that acknowledges and salutes the contribution of all the great men and women, irrespective of their ideological affiliations and political backgrounds, who struggled for India’s freedom, national renewal, and nation-building in the post-Independence era. Unlike our adversaries, we are not petty-minded. We are not dogmatic and blinkered by narrow considerations. For example, the refusal of the Deputy Chief Minister of West Bengal to participate in a function in Calcutta to celebrate the birth centenary of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, a great son of Bengal and India – that too, when the Prime Minister was present on the occasion – is repugnant to the BJP’s political culture.

The BJP’s Historic Responsibility

Dear Delegates, our Party’s National Council meeting is taking place at a very significant point in the history of our Party and in the history of India’s democratic political system. It is the first National Council meeting of the Party in the new century.

That a BJP-led Government is in office at the Centre in the inaugural year of the 21st century is not a mere coincidence of the calendar. History has placed the responsibility on our shoulders of leading India towards her all-round renewal and resurgence. *Niyati* (Destiny) has willed that the BJP provide the right leadership to the country at this critical juncture, so that a firm foundation is laid for the realization of the Party’s slogan which has now become the nation’s slogan: “Let us make the 21st Century India’s Century”.

Our Party has a sound vision for India’s future because we have a sound understanding of India’s past and the present. We look at issues in a holistic and integral way, and not in a partial and segmented manner. We take a long-range view of issues, and not get swayed by the attraction of short-term gains. We believe

in the approach of *samanvay* (harmonization) when faced with differing and conflicting interests. We always keep in mind the good of the nation as a whole - and not of any section or class - while evaluating a situation and formulating our stand or policy.

Our Nation-First Policy

All of you know how, when the situation demanded, we have sacrificed or overlooked the immediate gains for our own Party and chosen a path which we thought was good for the country and good for our democracy.

This is well illustrated by our principled stand over the tragic killing of Sikhs in the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. We made spirited efforts to preserve Hindu-Sikh amity when terrorism stalked Punjab for a decade. Earlier, in 1977, when our leadership decided to disband the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and merge it into the Janata Party, it was motivated by the larger interests of Indian democracy.

At every turn in our national life, we have spoken for the country and we have acted for the country. We shall continue to do so. Nationalism first and last, nationalism in big and small matters, nationalism in politics and nationalism in economics - this was, is, and will continue to be, the BJP's guiding principle.

However, in deciding our policy or stand on any issue in the light of nationalism, we have never been dogmatic and doctrinaire. We are proud of the fact that ours is perhaps the most innovative and self-adaptive party in India. There is no other party that has experimented so much, and yet has remained loyal to its own fundamental principles, as has the BJP.

Self-Adaptation through Self-Affirmation

When I look back and ask myself, "Which is the one basic factor that has helped our Party to grow from strength to strength in the past two decades?", the answer that strikes me as most appropriate is: "Self-Adaptation through Self-Affirmation." I am convinced that this is also the factor that best guarantees the BJP's future growth on a sustainable basis. Let me illustrate this thought.

Political adaptation: In the political sphere, the BJP's bold and imaginative strategy to build alliances with other political

parties based on a common agenda has helped both the country and our Party. We have allies now even in the North-East. In one North-Eastern State, the BJP is a partner in the Government.

So successfully have we broken the shackles of “political untouchability” that our opponents had forged around us, that those who had tried to marginalize us have themselves been marginalized. The formation of the NDA itself is the greatest testimony to our ability to respond to the needs of the nation.

Social adaptation: In the social sphere, we have made conscious efforts to reach out to newer sections of Indian society. We have done this by espousing the specific concerns of the various sections of our society, and by advocating the common regional and national concerns, that bind all of them. Consequently, our Party’s influence among the Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs has grown substantially in the past decade. We have today the highest proportionate number of MPs belonging to these strata of our society compared to any major party.

India is a vast and diverse country. Each of our States also presents a picture of incredible social diversity. It is a challenging task before any political party to be sensitive to local and sub-local issues and, at the same time uphold the interests of the entire society. Some parties tend to raise issues pertaining to a particular region, caste, class, or community. There is nothing wrong with this approach so long as one is not oblivious to the common interests of the entire society and the country.

It is one of the proud achievements of our Party that we have succeeded, to a significant extent, in reconciling diverse social and regional concerns. Of course, we should also admit in all humility that through our interaction with our allies in the NDA, we too have become more aware of, and sensitive to, the concerns of those sections of our society, which were earlier outside the ambit of our activities.

Economic adaptation: The goals of our Party’s economic philosophy have been to fulfil the basic needs of all our citizens by making full use of our own resources, creating productive employment for all able-bodied persons, and to build a prosperous and egalitarian India. We have chosen *Swavalamban* (self reliance) as the guiding principle in this pursuit.

As I shall explain later, our goals remain the same. Nevertheless, the means and the methods that we need to use to achieve them will necessarily change with the changing times. Unlike the Communists, our Party is not a prisoner of any dogma. We are prepared to learn from new facts and new experiences.

Political Situation at the Centre: Stable, but no Room for Complacency

Dear Delegates, I wish to now deal with some broad issues pertaining to the political, economic, and social situation facing our country and our Party.

The verdict of the people in the elections to the 13th Lok Sabha in September and October 1999 has ended the political instability at the Centre. The mandate was decisive. The BJP-led NDA Government was voted back to power. The electorate reposed its faith firmly in the leadership of our beloved Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Indeed, not since 1971 has an incumbent Prime Minister been returned to power. The verdict was also a stinging rebuke to the Congress Party, its "B Team", the Communists, and others who conspired to destabilize our Government in March last year.

More than the numerical majority of the NDA in the Lok Sabha, what sustains the stability of the Government is the enormous prestige of the Prime Minister and the cohesion among the constituent parties of the NDA. The relationship among the partners of the NDA is more harmonious than in its first stint in power. The coalition is also much more purposive and result-oriented than before. The BJP thanks all its allies for their unstinted support and cooperation in making the NDA the best experiment in coalition politics so far at the Centre. With the country having entered the era of coalitions, we are proud to have proved the Congress wrong in its self-serving prophecy that coalitions cannot provide stability and that the one party rule of the Congress alone can.

Although, the political waters are calm and no clouds of uncertainty hover above New Delhi, there can be no room for complacency on our part. The Congress has proved itself the biggest destabilizing force in Indian politics. Its commitment to democratic

values and its deference to the verdict of the people has grown so weak over the years that it has in the past recklessly destabilized non-Congress Governments.

The Congress Party is today dispirited and demoralized. It is riven with deep discontentment and dissensions within its ranks. Disenchantment with the party's leadership prevails at all levels. Yet, its capacity for misadventure cannot be underestimated. Besides the Congress Party, there are other disgruntled mischief-makers too in the Opposition.

The Communists, in particular, are panicking at the unstoppable erosion of their base, even in the three islands, where until recently, they claimed they had erected a Red Fortress. Even West Bengal is getting ready to throw out the Communists and put an end to 23 years of their non-performance in the forthcoming elections to the State Assembly. While the CPI has already lost its recognition as a national party, the CPI (M) is on the verge of receiving an official seal on its irrelevance in national politics.

All efforts of the Opposition to create misunderstanding and fissures between the BJP and its partners in the NDA have failed. However, the BJP and all our allies must always be on vigil.

Political Situation in the States

The political map of India shows greater diversity than ever before since Independence. No single national party dominates this map. The Congress, although it rules in more States than any other party, is certainly a party in irreversible decline. However, we have not been able to fill in the space vacated by the Congress and other parties.

Early next year, five big States will be going to the polls to elect new legislatures. Of the three new States of Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal, and Jharkhand, Uttaranchal will also elect a new Vidhan Sabha of its own. We must make all-out efforts to win the people's mandate, singly or in alliance with other parties in all these States. Our preparations must begin in right earnest now.

In addition to Uttar Pradesh, in those States where we already are in power -Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab, Meghalaya, and Goa - we should make concerted efforts to improve the performance of our Governments. The fact that we are in the

saddle at the Centre removes several impediments, which our State Governments earlier had to face. We must make full use of this to speed up the developmental work in these States.

In States where we are in the opposition, our Party units must intensify their efforts in playing the role of a responsible opposition. I urge them to take up people's issues and build rigorous political activity around them both inside and outside the legislatures. They should constantly take the incumbent Governments to task for the latter's failure in fulfilling their promises to the people. At the same time, they should also offer constructive support to the Governments in implementing all pro-people policies and programmes. The touchstone of our opposition or support to any policy of these Governments should be: "Does this policy accelerate the State's socio-economic development or retard it?"

The NDA Government: Its Significance for India and for Our Party

Friends, the emergence of the NDA on the national scene marks a positive new phase in Indian politics. By taking the lead in forming the NDA, and showing our ability to make it a stable and successful model of governance, the BJP has entered a new phase in its evolution. For us, it represents a definite movement forward. For the country's democracy too, it marks a definite movement forward. Previous coalitions collapsed because of two reasons: there was no central force to keep them together and there was no acceptable leader. The BJP is proud that we have helped the NDA overcome both these critical shortcomings.

The NDA, as our common manifesto has rightly pointed out, "is representative of both national interests and regional aspirations - after all, the NDA is nothing but the mirror-image of our nation's unity in multi-faceted diversity, rich pluralism, and federalism." The experience of the past two-and-a-half years of the NDA Government has clearly shown that it has afforded regional parties an opportunity to play their due role in the affairs of the Union Government, enabling them to develop a national perspective on various issues. At the same time, it has helped national parties to become more aware of regional issues and aspirations.

We must build on the successes of the NDA so far and make it an even more effective instrument of democratic governance. This is the common responsibility of both the BJP and all our allies. We must together further strengthen the practice of the “Dharma of Coalition” so that every issue, however contentious, can be sorted out through constant dialogue and consultations.

No Dilution of the Identity of the Party

Often, some of our well-wishers express apprehensions about the dilution of the BJP’s distinctive identity because of its decision to keep out of the common agenda of the NDA some issues that figured prominently in our previous manifestos. More than our own supporters, it is our opponents and detractors who seem to be interested in keeping a debate on this alive.

The doubts and criticisms on this score are unfounded. The basic identity of our Party is shaped by our unflinching commitment to nationalism, the integrity and idealism of our leaders and workers, and the discipline and cohesiveness in our organization. These have always distinguished the BJP from other parties, and will continue to do so.

The formation of the NDA based on a common agenda testifies to our ability to pursue our commitment to nationalism while, at the same time, persuading parties of different backgrounds to be allies of the BJP and accept its leadership. The experience of the past two-and-a-half years of the NDA Government at the Centre has clearly vindicated the correctness of our stand. Nobody can deny today that the BJP has gained, and not lost, by adopting this approach.

This is not a compromise that we have made merely to secure or retain power. Rather, we are using the opportunity of governance at the Centre to promote many of the larger interests of the nation. I would like our workers and supporters to explain our overall approach clearly and confidently, without being apologetic.

Kashmir and the Challenge to Our National Unity and Security

Dear delegates, no single issue claims greater attention of the national mind today than the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan's decade-long proxy war against India has now entered a deadly new phase. The humiliating defeat of Pakistan in the war in Kargil last year, soon followed by the military coup in Islamabad, has made our neighbour more desperate to achieve what it has failed to achieve since Partition: namely, dismemberment of India and annexation of Kashmir. The mass killing of Sikhs in March this year followed by the massacre of the Amarnath Yatra pilgrims and the migrant workers from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh – not to speak of the countless daily acts of violence targeting both civilians and our security forces – demonstrate how desperate Pakistan has become.

It has fallen on our Government to face this situation with a combination of clarity in perspective, firmness in strategy, and flexibility in tactics. The Prime Minister's historic bus journey to Lahore in February 1999 conclusively proved India's peace credentials. However, when Pakistan perfidiously attacked India a few months later in Kargil, our brave soldiers taught the enemy a befitting lesson. Our victory on the battlefield, complemented by our diplomatic success in isolating Pakistan on the world stage, marked a clear departure from the earlier weak-kneed handling of the Kashmir issue.

Our Government followed up on the success in Kargil with confident and well-thought-out initiatives to start talks with representatives of Kashmir-based groups. The Prime Minister's bold statement that the Government would hold these talks within the parameters of *Insaniyat* (humanism) further raised the hopes of the people of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh who crave peace, normalcy, and an end to bloodshed. The fact that hopes for peace were rising in the Kashmir Valley terrorized Pakistan. This is why, Pakistan, both directly and through the network of "jihadi" organizations that it has long patronized, has stepped up its war of terrorism against India.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir today is delicate and complex. It is changing fast, throwing up both challenges and new opportunities for progress. Our Party has a crucial responsibility

in evolving a correct approach in the best interests of India's unity, integrity, and security. New situations always demand new and creative thinking without jettisoning the broad national objectives. In the months to come, the Party may be required to debate and decide its position on several issues that may constitute the basis of the talks between the Government and Kashmir-based groups. I am confident that both our Party and our Government will rise to the occasion.

The situation in the North-East continues to cause concern. In spite of some positive developments, extremist groups, actively aided by the ISI, are still on the prowl. ISI-backed terrorist and subversive organizations have spread their tentacles in other parts of the country, too. Naxal violence in several States continues unabated. The Party urges the Government and the people to continue to be vigilant towards these dangers. There is also a need for greater co-ordination between the Centre and the State Governments. Let us all together make India a "zero-tolerance" zone for terrorism and all types of extremism.

It is also the responsibility of all the political parties and social organisations in the country to maintain peace and communal harmony in the face of continuing provocation by Pakistan and its agents. As recent revelations on the diabolical activities of ISI-backed organisations like Deendar Anjuman have shown, Pakistan is bent on fomenting communal trouble and violence. The more we frustrate evil designs, the more will Pakistan find it difficult to continue with its proxy war against India.

I wish to emphasize this point because of the close inter-relationship between communal peace, internal security, and India's image abroad. For example, some unfortunate recent incidents have disturbed the traditional peace and harmony between Hindus and Christians. Although these were an aberration, the media and the Opposition highlighted them in such a manner as to sully our country's fair name. This also enabled the ISI to play a nefarious role, although this role was soon exposed.

In this context, we should all heed the sagacious call by our Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech this year: "I appeal to the people of all faiths and castes not to create imaginary enemies

and not to resort to the path of using the sword that inflicts wounds on oneself.”

Economy: Achievements and Challenges

Friends, in spite of many odds, our Government has managed the economy admirably. The economy is looking up. Growth rate is rising, inflation is under control, food grains production has increased in spite of the vagaries of the weather, Foreign Direct Investment as well as foreign portfolio investment is steadily growing, and industrial production is on the increase.

I am happy that the Government is taking all the necessary measures to carry on the reform programme with the proper safeguards to protect the employees of the Public Sector and the interests of the common man. Disinvestment in the public sector will be so carried out that it will not hurt the welfare of labour. Our policy is to use the proceeds of disinvestment to enhance further the allocation to the social sector and to retire public debt, which has become a heavy burden to us.

As the Indian economy restructures itself in the context of liberalization and globalization, the period of transition will bring great challenges for the Indian industry – big, medium, and small. I urge the Government to prepare a sound strategy for transition. Within the parameters of the WTO and our international obligations, the Government should provide adequate protection for as long as necessary to such of our industries as need help to face international competition. The Government should also increase its efforts to retrain, re-equip and redeploy those engaged in small and traditional enterprises that will become technologically obsolete or face other kinds of difficulties in the transition period.

I do appreciate that it is not easy for the Government to accomplish a turnaround of the economy overnight. We have to undo the ill effects of the wrong development and skewed growth strategies followed by the successive governments for over fifty years. But the people have high expectations of us. Moreover, they want quick results. Therefore, our long term strategy of bringing the economy to the right track should go hand in hand with an effective safety net to see that the burden on the common man,

the housewife, the marginal farmer, and the families that are below the poverty line, is eased considerably.

The ultimate measure of the health of the economy for them is not impersonal and abstract statistical data on WPI, CPI, and the quantum of foreign exchange reserves. When they go to the bazaar, their monthly income should buy them their essentials and leave them with some money for future contingencies. This perspective should guide our economic policy. If the burden on the common man is not eased, all the promising indices lose their meaning and an impression will gain ground that the economic reforms are only for the benefit of the richer sections. I am happy that the government is taking several measures that are intended to benefit the poorer and disadvantaged sections of our society.

The *Mantra* of Faster Development

Friends, the mandate that the people of India have given to our Party and the NDA carries with it a historic responsibility. Their expectations from our Government are many. Government after Government in the past, especially after the 1960s, have belied their high hopes and failed to fulfil their needs. Although India has many impressive achievements to her credit in the past five decades, the common man generally remains cynical about Government's promises and programmes. This is because of the continued gap between the people's aspirations and Governments' performance.

The NDA sought the mandate of the electorate on the promise of reducing this gap. We must make our best effort to fulfil this promise. We must pledge ourselves to transform our *Swaraj* into *Suraj* for the benefit of all our citizens.

We can do so by achieving faster, broader, and more equitable economic development. In this context, our Prime Minister has recently given a stirring call to the nation to make the next ten years a Decade of Development. To realize this objective, he has also set an ambitious target before the nation to double its per capita income in the next ten years. This calls for our economy to grow at a rate of more than 9 per cent a year from the present 6.5 per cent.

This target is not just our ambition; it is also our categorical

imperative. Without our economy growing at this higher rate, we will not be able to either generate large-scale employment and win the war against poverty, or reduce regional and social imbalances.

Our country has all the natural, human, technological, and managerial resources to achieve this target. India now also has the leadership with the required political vision and the will, which it lacked earlier. What is needed, however, is to channel the collective energies of all the Indian people for the single-minded pursuit of this over-riding national objective.

Our Government has embraced comprehensive economic reforms as the fastest and surest way to achieve this objective. To some extent, the country has already evolved a broad consensus on economic reforms. Our Party and our Government are called upon to strengthen this consensus further.

***Swadeshi*, Liberalization, and Globalization: Complementary to each other**

Friends, there is much debate these days on the meaning, intent, and content of the economic reforms followed by our Government. Some critical voices are heard every now and then within our Party and among the adherents of our ideological fraternity. Some even say that our Party has abandoned its long-held commitment to *Swadeshi* and effected a U-turn by adopting these reforms. I wish to state emphatically today that this criticism is wrong for three reasons.

First, historically the BJP, and earlier the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, had all along favoured debureaucratization, decontrol, and an end to the license-permit-quota raj, which had throttled our economy for many decades under successive Congress Governments. We never supported state socialism, which was influenced by the failed Soviet model. Our Party always advocated an economic system, in which the Government played only the role of a policy-maker, facilitator, and enforcer of laws and rules, leaving the actual economic activity to the creative forces of society.

Secondly, it is precisely because of the wrong strategies and policies adopted by the previous Governments that India, notwithstanding her awesome resources and capabilities, is still

saddled with mass poverty, unemployment, and under-development. This stark reality alone is a sufficient reason for us to make a clear departure from the past.

Thirdly, the past two decades have seen far-reaching economic and political changes around the world. Governments all over the world are reviewing and revising their role in the economy by promoting the private and the non-governmental sectors. Inter-dependence among nations has increased manifold. In addition, global trade, investment, capital flows, and the revolutionary advances in communications, computers, and the Internet have made globalization an inescapable reality. This new global reality brings both challenges and new opportunities to India. India cannot afford to either overlook these challenges or ignore the opportunities to achieve greater prosperity for our people.

Therefore, *Swadeshi* in today's context does not mean blind opposition to either liberalization or globalization. It means evolving an effective strategy to further our national interests by seizing the opportunities and resisting the challenges presented by globalization. *Swadeshi* is not a static concept. As I have stated earlier, India has always adapted itself to new realities without ever compromising what is good for its people.

This does not mean that the course of economic reforms begun by previous Governments and continued by our Government is free from problems. All these problems could not possibly have been addressed in the two-and-a-half years that our Government has been in office. For instance, there is an urgent need to reverse the prolonged neglect of agriculture, food processing, rural development, small and cottage industries, textiles, and other traditional industries. These sectors of the economy employ a majority of our workforce and have the capability to generate large-scale additional employment. There is also the urgent need to speed up infrastructure development in power, railways, roads, ports, airports, etc.

Since March 1998, our Government has achieved many successes in the economic field. It has initiated far-reaching reforms, especially, in Information Technology and Telecom, whose benefits are already visible. I am confident that, in the coming months,

the Government will focus more on those areas of our economy that have so far received less attention.

Gaon, Gareeb, and Kisan: Our primary commitment

Notwithstanding rapid industrialization and urbanization, India continues to live and work primarily in our villages. Agriculture is the mainstay of a majority of our population. Our vision of building a prosperous, developed, and self-confident India is rooted in a firm commitment to rural development and the development of our agriculture.

Unfortunately, agriculture has not received adequate focus in the past fifty years. Such successes that our hard-working kisans have achieved – for example, the Green Revolution – only go to show how much can be gained even with limited Governmental attention. It goes to the credit of our Government, that it has, for the first time since Independence, announced a National Agriculture Policy. It aims to facilitate a 4 per cent annual rate of growth in agriculture production.

Similarly, for rural development, we have redesigned many existing schemes, introduced several schemes, and vastly increased the budgetary allocations, and decentralized their implementation.

Our Party has a vital role in ensuring the successful implementation of the new agriculture policy as well as the plethora of rural development schemes. I urge our grassroots Party workers to involve themselves actively in monitoring especially those programmes that are aimed at alleviating the conditions of the poorest of the poor. Schemes such as the *Indira Awas Yojana*, *Swarnjayanti Swarozgar Yojana*, *Janashree Bima Yojana*, *Annapurna Yojana*, and *Sarvapriya Yojana* lend huge scope for our workers to mobilize the people to benefit from them. In doing so, they should ensure that there is no favouritism, no corruption, and no malpractices. I need hardly add that all this will help our Party to expand and strengthen its grassroots support in rural areas.

Social Justice: Our approach should be “Reservations Plus”

Dear Delegates, *Samajik Nyay* underpins our Party’s vision for a new and resurgent India. The economic exploitation and social injustice that millions and millions of our brothers and sisters belonging to dalit, adivasi, and other disadvantaged communities have been subjected to for centuries have deformed Indian society. They have created a painful dichotomy between India’s lofty cultural and civilizational values on the one hand and the wretched living conditions of so many of our fellow citizens on the other.

This dichotomy is a wound on our national conscience that we cannot continue to live with in the 21st century. This wound will have to be healed or it will continue to distort and decelerate our nation’s progress.

Until now, the issue of social justice has been addressed by the policy of reservation. This has, no doubt, served its intended purpose to a considerable extent. Reservation in educational institutions has enabled a whole new class of educated people to emerge among dalits, adivasis, and OBCs who, without the benefit of such affirmative action, would have continued to languish in educational backwardness. Similarly, reservations in Government employment have helped the representation of these deprived sections to grow from near-zero to levels that are at least visible.

Most importantly, reservations in Parliament, State legislatures, and Panchayati Raj institutions have politically empowered these hitherto powerless groups, giving them self-respect, self-confidence, and a stake in governance.

The BJP has always supported the policy of reservations for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBCs, and our support shall remain as strong as ever. Indeed, we take legitimate pride in the achievement of our Government to extend the provisions of reservation by another ten years and to remove the problem relating to the filling up of backlog in reserved vacancies, even though it required an amendment to the Constitution.

However, an objective assessment of the experience of the past five decades proves that reservations are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to secure social justice. The vast majority of our dalit, adivasi, and OBC brethren continue to live in poverty and educational deprivation. Most of them are not in a position

even to avail the existing provisions of reservations. When a majority of them remain condemned to continued poverty and illiteracy, they cannot conceivably take adequate advantage of political reservation.

At the present rate of change in their social, economic, and educational status, it will not be before many more decades that they can enjoy some parity with the more privileged and forward sections of our society. This slow change is not acceptable to our Party. Therefore, the time has come for the BJP to put forward a bold new agenda before the nation to secure faster social justice, educational uplift, and economic advancement to all the underprivileged sections of our society.

To understand better the close linkage between social justice, economic democracy, and political freedom, it is instructive for us to recall the sage advice of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar:

“The soul of Democracy is the doctrine of one man, one value. Unfortunately, Democracy has attempted to give effect to this doctrine only so far as the political structure is concerned by adopting the rule of one man, one vote.... It has left the economic structure to take the shape given by those who are in a position to mould it. This has happened because Constitution lawyers ... never realized that it was equally essential to prescribe the shape and form of the economic structure of society, if Democracy is to live up to its principle of one man, one value. Time has come to take a bold step and define both the economic structure as well as the political structure of society by the Law of the Constitution....”

A 10-Point Agenda for Advancing Social Justice

In this context, I wish to present a 10-Point Agenda for Social Justice:

- 1. Continue with reservations:** We should continue all the existing provisions of educational, employment, and political reservation for as long as is necessary, and ensure their effective implementation at all levels.
- 2. Effective enforcement of laws to curb social injustice:** The record so far of implementing the existing legal provisions to curb social injustice and discrimination based on caste leaves much to be desired. The offenders are rarely

brought to book. In particular, the guilty in atrocities against Dalits, Adivasis, and lower castes are seldom prosecuted and punished. Consequently, the victimized communities often feel that the police and the administrative and legal machinery cannot be depended upon and that they should defend themselves. Extremist groups for their own nefarious ends have in many places, exploited this situation. The unending trail of large-scale caste violence in Bihar, for example, is a shame on modern India. The time has therefore, come to review the implementation of the laws against social injustice and atrocities thoroughly.

3. **Economic Reforms as a Guarantor of Social Justice:** It is now widely accepted that reservations in government jobs alone cannot adequately advance social and economic justice for the deprived communities. At the same time, the capacity of the Centre and State governments to create new jobs is increasingly constrained. It is, therefore, obvious that the only answer to free our dalit, adivasi, and OBC brethren from the chains of poverty and social backwardness is the rapid generation of millions of new opportunities for employment and self-employment in the private, informal, and non-government sectors of the economy. For this, we need to broad-base and accelerate our economic growth to a rate of nearly ten per cent of GDP yearly on a sustainable long-term basis. This target cannot be realized without speeding up the process of economic reforms. Therefore, faster economic reforms must be seen as a crucial guarantor of social justice for dalits, adivasis, OBCs, and other disadvantaged people.
4. **Samajik Nyay with Samajik Samarasata:** To strengthen and further deepen our democracy, it is of course necessary to politically mobilize more and more deprived castes and communities, which have hitherto remained unrepresented or under-represented in the political process. However, political parties should exercise maximum self-restraint in mobilizing support exclusively or excessively on caste and community lines. Such mobilization, especially for

electoral gains, invariably creates tension and division in society, which ultimately weakens the common effort for social justice. The imperative of *Samajik Samarasata* (social harmony) should be never lost sight of in pursuit of *Samajik Nyay*.

5. **Raise literacy to the national average:** We must have a crash programme to increase the level of literacy among dalits, adivasis, and educationally most backward sections of OBCs to the national average within the next ten years. A specific component of this programme must aim at raising the levels of female literacy to national levels in those States and regions where it is abysmally low today. To achieve this purpose, all the resources of the Centre, State Governments, the private sector, NGOs, and existing educational institutions should be effectively harnessed in a common mission. Literacy-enhancing programmes should be combined with vocational training, health, population, and family welfare education.
6. **Post better Administrators for better Results:** There is a disturbing tendency in the bureaucracy to look upon postings in departments and programmes related to literacy, education, health, and vocational training, which require grassroots work and regular travel to remote and underdeveloped areas, as “unattractive” and “non-glamorous”. Civil servants who are not themselves motivated can hardly be expected to motivate the people for successful implementation of such programmes. High levels of corruption also plague these programmes. Consequently, the Centre and the State Governments spend vast resources on them year after year, without achieving desired results. It is necessary, therefore, to post the best administrators and also competent managers drawn from the non-Government sector for the implementation of this mission, which should be subjected to a regular social audit.
7. **Impose obligations on the Private Sector:** The private sector is today exempt from the obligation of reservations. However, there is no reason why it should be exempt also

from the obligations of social sector development. It should be made mandatory for every private business to earmark a certain portion of its turnover for supporting accredited non-governmental activities aimed at providing better educational, health-care and other facilities in social development for the underprivileged. Compliance with this social obligation should be made one of the conditions for considering their proposals for loans and other facilities from the Government, banks, and financial institutions.

8. **Make traditional vocations more remunerative:** A majority of the poor belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBCs are engaged in unorganized economic activities. They are employed or self-employed in arts, crafts, weaving, and other traditional vocations. There should be a national mission to improve their economic conditions by supporting their economic activities through better credit provision, better marketing, better management, and greater inputs from appropriate science and technology. Exports of these products should be promoted in such a way that primary producers get their fair share in the export earnings.
9. **Promote more entrepreneurs and professionals:** Wherever possible, the Government should introduce suitable legislation to make specific categories of Dalits, adivasis, and OBCs part or full owners of the local natural resources that they work on. For example, tens of thousands of poor people are engaged in quarrying work in India. They usually belong to lower castes. Can we not have a provision which mandates that quarries are leased only to cooperatives of quarry workers, and that anybody who wishes to do this business must partner with such cooperatives? This approach can be extended to other economic activities such as brick kilns, gathering of forest produce, etc. Development of entrepreneurship among Dalits, adivasis, and OBCs is a critical need for the next phase of Social Justice movement in India. The greater the number of successful entrepreneurs, professionals, and managers from these communities, the higher will be their

demonstration effect on other members of these communities. Towards this end, the functioning of bodies such as the SC and ST Finance Corporation, Backward Class Commission, etc. at the Centre and in the States should be thoroughly reviewed and improved.

- 10. Reduce the 'Digital Divide':** Information Technology, biotechnology, and other enterprises based on new areas of knowledge have become the new engines of wealth creation. At the same time, these have created legitimate apprehensions about a new "Digital Divide" between those who have access to IT and those who do not. In the Indian context, this divide has an additional social overlap in the sense that dalits, adivasis and OBCs are our IT have-nots, they will continue to remain so for a long time unless effective remedial action is taken. The Government, the IT industry, the rest of the business class, and academic institutions should urgently respond to this potential danger. They should launch special efforts to reach the benefits of computers, communications, Internet, and other opportunities of IT to these communities, so that IT becomes the newest tool to advance social justice.

Increased Focus needed on Social Reform

Promotion of *Samajik Nyay* and *Samajik Samarasata* cannot be achieved through governmental action alone. The role of the society itself in creating a new awareness about social solidarity and changing outmoded customs and practices can hardly be overemphasized.

History shows that self-reform has always been an important feature of our society. Much of the uniqueness and vigour of the Freedom Movement came from the conscious and active efforts made by its great leaders to combine political struggle with a strong agenda for social reform. Unfortunately, after Independence, political activity became divorced from the liberative agenda of social reform.

Illiteracy, practice of untouchability, gender discrimination, the evil of dowry, plight of the elderly, environmental degradation, and deculturization of our youth are some of the problems that

cannot be comprehensively addressed by political and governmental action alone. Initiatives and efforts by non-governmental and voluntary organizations are commendable. However, their best efforts are not good enough, given the scale of problems the Indian society is facing. It is time we thought of enlarging our agenda and addressed these issues also, and contributed our mite to free our country from these shameful social evils.

A dalit who is the victim of the practice of untouchability and social discrimination cannot wholeheartedly sing the glory of *Bharat Mata*. An illiterate person cannot positively identify himself with the nation. A young man who is struggling to find a job opportunity finds it difficult to engage in the service of the nation constructively. A young girl harassed for dowry can scarcely believe that our culture earnestly espoused the value "*Yatra Nari poojyante...*" Unless we strive to abolish the strictures that give rise to discrimination of and disadvantage to these sections, their participation in our national mainstream cannot be meaningful and wholesome.

Our Party should actively support and encourage all such genuine efforts without, in any way, trying to reap immediate electoral benefits. I would like all our workers and leaders to be associated with some social reform activity in his or her community, neighborhood, or region, so that we make the social and political processes of development proceed in tandem. I will further deal with this issue later in my speech.

Further Expansion of the Party's Social base

Dear Delegates, as I have said before, our Party has rapidly expanded its social base to reach out to newer areas of our social and geographical space. Our achievements in this respect have reflected themselves in electoral gains at the Centre and in many States.

However, the results of the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, and also, recent elections in some States show a trend that demands a serious look from us. Our gains seem to have reached a plateau. Both our seats and the vote share in the Lok Sabha elections of 1998 and 1999 remained more or less the same. In some States, which were our traditional strongholds, we have suffered setbacks.

In some other States, where our Party has grown rapidly in the past decade or so and where we expected to come to power, our performance was not up to the mark. We need to think seriously about our future strategy to ensure that we grow from strength to strength on a sustainable basis.

Some political observers in the country have already concluded that the BJP has reached a point of saturation electorally. This is an incorrect assessment of our Party as well as the overall political situation. Indeed, these observers had also voiced the same conclusion in the 1991 and 1996 Lok Sabha elections! However, each time we proved them wrong. The challenge before us is to prove them wrong again in the future.

I believe that, what is most important to face this challenge successfully is our own self-confidence in our ability to do so. We must have faith in ourselves, in our policies and programmes, and, above all, in our people. It is this self-confidence, it is this refusal in the past to accept any level of achievement as the terminal point of our potential for growth, which has helped us go further and grow further.

In addition, we should also honestly introspect on the factors that are impeding our continued rapid expansion. I can identify three such factors.

One, although, we have been able to attract dalits, adivasis, and OBCs in significant numbers in recent years, we have yet to consolidate this new support base and continuously expand it among these numerically and socially important sections of our society. I urge all our Party units to make sustained efforts to expand our political and organisational work among dalits, adivasis, and OBCs.

Secondly, in States where we were elected to power, we have generally not succeeded in beating the anti-incumbency trend. In other words, the BJP has not yet become the “preferred party of governance” in the eyes of the people. I would urge all our colleagues in States where we have been victims of the anti-incumbency factor to do a critical analysis of their gains and losses. They should also learn from the positive experiences of other political parties that have survived the anti-incumbency trend.

The third factor is the equation between our Party and the

Muslim community. This is a complex subject in itself, and I wish to deal with it in some detail.

Reworking the Relationship between the BJP and Indian Muslims

An undeniable feature of Indian politics for the past five decades has been a certain distance separating Indian Muslims and the Bharatiya Janata Party and, earlier, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. What is equally undeniable is that this distance has not helped either our Muslim brethren or our Party. Above all, it has not helped India and her democracy.

Several historical reasons account for this distance. The Partition of India harmed the interests of Indian Muslims in many ways. One of the important areas where it did so was in politics. Muslims have not been able to play their due role in the country's democratic process. Such parties as they have been supporting have mostly used them as vote banks, to keep them away from the BJP by using the bogey of communalism. This, however, has not benefited the Muslim masses. They have, by and large, neither got their rightful share in the nation's development nor been able to join the national mainstream to play their due role in nation-building.

On our part, we in the BJP have not made sustained efforts to reach out to Indian Muslims in a bid to weaken the influence on their minds of the sustained negative propaganda by our adversaries. We have somehow taken it for granted that our Party will never receive any significant support from them. This pre-conceived approach has not helped our Party either. Results of the 1999 Lok Sabha elections have clearly shown that our marginal gains were totally out of sync with the calibre and prestige of our leadership, the highly favourable atmosphere for the BJP and the unfavourable conditions for the Congress and our other adversaries. One of the chief reasons for our less-than-expected success was our Party's failure to secure Muslim votes. Ironically, although Shri Atalji is highly respected and popular among Indian Muslims, they tend to keep away from the BJP.

We cannot afford to allow this situation to continue. If we do so, we shall be hurting our own future prospects, and Muslims will continue to be used as vote banks by our adversaries. In this context, I wish to recall what the Chennai Declaration of our Party,

adopted in the last session of the National Council in December 1999, has said:

“Results in all the recent elections have shown that the BJP’s onward march depends critically on its ability to reach out to those sections of Indian society who have, for various reasons, remained uninfluenced by its appeal. It has, especially, become necessary to expand the Party’s support base among religious minorities, who are an integral part of our society. The Party shall thoroughly review its existing relationship with religious minorities consistent with its resolve to strengthen Indian nationhood. Based on a sincere and principled approach of espousing and redressing their issues in a just and non-appeasement manner, the BJP shall make intensified efforts to increase its support base among religious minorities.”

In the past two decades, our Party has successfully reached out to dalits, adivasis, and OBCs. Muslims are the last major section of Indian society that we need to reach out to. There is nothing in our ideology, policies, and programmes for anyone to surmise that we should not, or cannot, do so. Rather, history beckons us and demands of us to do so for the good of India, of Indian Muslims and of our own Party.

Several favourable factors make me optimistic in my assessment that we shall succeed in this endeavour.

- First, many Muslims are thoroughly disillusioned with the politics of “minoritism” of the parties that they have been traditionally supporting. They have seen through the insincerity of these parties and their failure to improve the general lot of Muslims.
- Secondly, they have also seen for themselves that our Governments, both at the Centre and in States, have been fair and non-discriminating towards all communities.
- Thirdly, they know that they have experienced no diminution of, or threat to, their religious freedom under our governments.
- Fourthly, our record of maintaining communal peace and harmony stands in sharp contrast to what prevailed earlier.
- Fifthly, the far-reaching economic reforms that our Government has initiated are certain to speed up all-round

development, creating more employment and more wealth-generation opportunities for all, including Indian Muslims.

- Lastly, the integrity and stature of our leadership cannot but evoke respect and admiration among Muslims, as much as they do among other communities.

All these factors have exposed the falsehood of our opponents' propaganda against the BJP. All that is needed, is for us to take our appeal and our activities to Muslim homes and mohallas. In the months to come, our Party should draw up a concrete charter of action to translate our intent into practice. We should forcefully espouse developmental issues concerning common Muslims. We should actively work to bring more and more dynamic and socially respected Muslim activists into our Party. We should also have more Muslims in our list of candidates to various elections.

In doing all this, we should be guided by what Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay himself exhorted us to remember in his presidential address at the Calicut session of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in December 1967. He said:

“Muslims are the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood.”

Constitution Review: No Altering of the basic structure

The appointment of a Commission to review the Constitution is one of the major acts of our Government. It was done to fulfil the election promise of the National Democratic Alliance. The Congress Party which had amended the Constitution scores of times (not always for honest purposes at that), and the Left parties are trying to rake up unwarranted controversies about the review. They are spreading patent lies about the exercise with a view to creating confusion among the people.

Let me tell them from this forum that the rationale behind the review is simple. The purpose of the exercise is honest. We believe that it is imperative for a vibrant democracy to subject its statute from time to time to a thorough review. It is necessary to see if it can be improved keeping in mind the far-reaching changes that have taken place in our polity and society. The framers of the Constitution, including Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and other great minds of that time, did not put a seal of finality on the document.

However, I would like to make it clear to the nation that the basic structure of the Constitution would remain intact. None of the provisions that is aimed at providing succour to the disadvantaged, those who are victims of discrimination and exploitation through ages, specifically the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, will be altered by the review process. In this context, it is the duty of all our Party workers to remove any apprehensions about the Constitution review from the minds of the people.

The Party must take Greater Interest in Foreign Policy

One of the major achievements of our Government has been in the area of foreign policy. The past two-and-a-half years have seen a sea change in India's international standing. Our country today enjoys better relations with every country in the world than before – except Pakistan. We have been able to achieve this despite the fact that some major powers strongly criticized our Government's bold and historic decision to exercise the nuclear option in May, 1998. They imposed economic and other sanctions against India. It goes to the credit of the Indian people and our Government that we refused to succumb to such pressure and successfully weathered the sanctions.

The efforts to censure and isolate India quickly failed. Every one of the major powers who criticized our nuclear action has now accepted the reality and recognized India as a powerful and responsible player in global affairs. The successful visits of our Prime Minister, our effective participation in several regional and international forums, and the visits of many important world leaders to India testify to the increased prestige and influence that India has gained under Shri Atalji's able leadership.

Friends, now that we are a ruling Party and a dominant player in Indian politics, we need to pay far greater attention to international issues than before. We need to strengthen the resources within the Party to gain deeper understanding of the complex issues that are shaping the world today. The International Affairs Cell in our Party must forge greater links with foreign policy experts and organizations.

I believe that the time has also come for the BJP to establish fraternal ties with political parties and organisations around the

world. We should regularly send our Party functionaries and the functionaries of the morchas abroad for study and interaction. Similarly, we should keep inviting functionaries of foreign political parties to meet us. In this endeavour, we need to strengthen further the role of the Overseas Friends of the BJP in different parts of the world.

India should care more for the Indian Diaspora

Friends, nearly 30 million Non-Resident Indians and Persons of Indian Origin live outside India. They have earned a name for themselves and India with their impressive achievements in various occupations, as also their loyalty towards their respective host or adopted countries. However, their emotional, cultural, and spiritual ties with Mother India remain unbroken. They are making considerable contributions to our national development by investing their financial, intellectual, and professional resources in India. It is the duty of all of us and our Governments at the Centre and in the States to assist our overseas brethren in their times of need.

Recent developments in Fiji, for example, have clearly shown the trauma and tribulations that people of Indian origin have to face from time to time. Our Government deserves to be congratulated on its mobilizing the opinion of the countries of the region, the Commonwealth countries, and the international community against the constitutional thuggery that was enacted against the legitimate democratically-elected Government of Shri Mahendra Chaudhary. The struggle for the restoration of democracy and a non-discriminatory constitutional order in Fiji is not yet over. India needs to continue its efforts to mobilize international solidarity for the success of this struggle.

India must play a more pro-active role in protecting and promoting the legitimate rights and interests of our brothers and sisters abroad, rather than reacting to crises. We must also actively mobilize the growing economic and political power of the Indian Diaspora in favour of India's interests as well as to defend the interests of overseas Indians whenever they are threatened. Globally Indians are one community. We must care for each other and cooperate with each other for the prosperity and happiness of all. Our Party should play a far more important role in this effort than

we have done so far.

Tasks before the Party

Friends, we have come a long way. Nearly fifty years after we began our ideological journey, and twenty years after travelling as the Bharatiya Janata Party, we are today a party of governance. We are the dominant politico-ideological force in India. We today have the responsibility, and the opportunity to realize, in substantial if not in full measure, the objectives with which we began our journey.

As I have stated before, this is by no means the high-point of our progress. The political situation in the country is very favourable to us. We are blessed with an excellent leadership that commands respect not only among our allies, but even among our adversaries, and of course, the people at large. We have everything going for us to reach higher levels of success in our mission to transform India's *Swaraj* into *Suraj*. What will take us along this onward journey is the same engine that has propelled us this far – namely, the unity and discipline in our ranks, clarity and conviction in our thinking, and integrity and dynamism in our action.

It is on the state of our Party today that I now wish to do some plain speaking. The Chennai Declaration has dealt with these and other issues quite comprehensively. I urge all our Party workers to study it seriously.

A Party with a difference: Redeeming a Proud Claim

Dear Colleagues, while our achievements bring us pride, there is no denying the fact that we have let many deviations and deformities creep into our organization. Where these have been allowed to grow unchecked, the Party has had to suffer grievous setbacks.

Groupism, factional fights, lust for power among leading activists of the party in some States, autocratic behaviour of some office bearers at the State and district levels, hankering after the loaves and fishes of office, polarization of the rank and file of the party along caste and community lines in some cases, the ugly race for getting party tickets to contest elections, and creeping association with criminal elements in some rare places – all these

distortions are totally alien to the BJP's basic tenets as well as our proud tradition.

I have no doubt that these are still only aberrations, and not primary features of our Party. Even so, they cause deep and legitimate disillusionment among our workers, supporters, as well as the people at large. Consequently, both our well-wishers and our adversaries frequently call into question our claim that we are a Party with a difference.

Indiscipline: Let us draw a clear *Lakshman Rekha*

We have to be especially vigilant about the malaise of indiscipline and the defiance of the party's collective decisions by individuals and groups. If we are not a disciplined party, we had better not be a party at all. We should put down these tendencies mercilessly. I wish to make it clear today that indiscipline will not be tolerated. We should nip it in the bud so that treating this canker at a later stage does not become exceedingly difficult. In this important endeavour, I seek the support and cooperation from all of you.

We should seriously introspect as to why such tendencies are developing in our Party. It is not enough to evolve mechanisms to manage and contain these tendencies within acceptable limits. Instead of dealing with these symptoms, we need to address ourselves to the root causes that give rise to these tendencies and deal with them comprehensively and honestly.

We have to strengthen the political and ideological education of our members and cadres. We have to pay particular attention to the task of inculcating our unique political culture among our new members who are joining us continuously and in large numbers. We should evolve an explicit and unambiguous code of conduct. We should draw a clear *Lakshman Rekha*.

***Shuchita*: Let People's Perception be our Yardstick**

This is a serious matter, which our Party, from top to bottom, must deeply ponder over and take urgent remedial measures. We have to remind ourselves continuously that the people of India have given us a mandate with high expectations. They expect efficient and good governance from us where we are in power

and responsible and principled political behaviour where we are not in power. Equally importantly, they expect that we restore moral and ethical values in public life; that we put an end to the cynical exercise of political power for promoting personal and sectional interests. They expect nothing less than *shuchita* or thorough-going probity from us.

The people have seen even great organizations like the Indian National Congress corrupted by power and degenerated into self-serving groups and factions. Therefore, they have every reason to be apprehensive too. It was easier for us to be a party with a difference as long as we were small or away from the corrupting corridors of power. The real test is now and in the coming days.

I am glad that during the last two-and-a-half years in office, not a single credible charge of corruption has been levelled against us. Yet, on this score too, there is no room for complacency. Provisions of the statute cannot be the sole benchmark for our probity. Our integrity should be more than technical and legal. In short, it is the people's perception of our conduct that should be our yardstick. Even a murmur should make us sit up and take note. We should be clean and also seen to be clean and honest.

Austerity and humility ought to continue to mark our private and public lifestyle. A good example of simple living even while occupying the highest office in the Party is that of my predecessor Shri Kushabhau Thakre. We are proud that we have many such leaders and *karyakartas* in our party. Let them be the model for all others as well as for new entrants into the Party.

Party - Government Relationship

Further strengthening the relationship between the Party and our Government is one of the important tasks before us. Since we have come to power at the Centre for the first time, it is still a new experience for the Party. I often hear comments and criticism from our *karyakartas* that those in Government are neglecting the Party. Similarly, I also hear some of our colleagues in the Government remark that Party workers often do not realize how the Government functions, what can be done, and what cannot be done.

I believe that there is some merit in the complaints of both. Sometimes our workers forget that we are now a ruling Party and

that being in power brings its own responsibilities. Some of their public pronouncements and behaviour appear as if they think that we are still a Party in the Opposition.

A small number of them also believe that, now that our Party is in power, they can follow the same methods as Congress workers did when theirs was the ruling party, and that they have a right to be personally benefited. They seek positions in Government and semi-Government bodies. They ask for jobs, postings, and transfers. Rather than bringing issues of public concern to Ministers, they often lobby for private interests. Let us not forget that such unprincipled political behavior cost the Congress party dearly. It created a perception among the people that Congressmen are self-seekers and misuse power.

Similarly, some people in the Government, and also MPs and MLAs, behave as if they have no more responsibilities towards the Party organization and the workers who are its backbone. Our *karyakartas* should not feel that ministers are inaccessible or indifferent to them. Very often, ministers do not visit Party office and Party workers during their tours. Even when Party functionaries bring issues of public concern to them, they respond in a bureaucratic manner. They do not make much effort to communicate their own and the rest of the Government's policies and programmes to Party workers. When *karyakartas* are themselves in the dark, or are demotivated, it is difficult for them to explain the Government's actions to the people.

There is another reason why closer coordination between the Party and the Government is essential. Our Government has embarked upon many pro-people and pro-development projects and schemes. However, the implementation of these cannot be left exclusively to the bureaucracy. All of us know how the bureaucracy functions when there is no political direction and people's pressure. Our Party has a vital stake in ensuring the success of these projects and schemes, because we are ultimately accountable to the people who have given us their mandate. Hence, our Party units at all levels must involve themselves in an appropriate manner in monitoring their implementation.

We have to give fresh ideas to the government. We have to suggest policy packages to it and design creative strategies to

implement them successfully. We have to counter effectively the motivated and unfounded criticism mounted by the opponents of the Government. It is our responsibility to see that the Government receives the benefit of our feedback, and the people receive the benefits of the Government's good work.

Similarly, giving effective publicity to the Government's developmental and welfare work cannot be left entirely to the Government machinery. Our *karyakartas* should employ all possible means, including regular and direct mass contact to communicate the Government's agenda and achievements.

Women's Empowerment: Inside and outside the Party

Friends, a silent revolution is taking place in Indian society. The name of this revolution is empowerment. *Nari Shakti*, which until now has remained either dormant or neglected, is beginning to assert itself. Our sisters and daughters are becoming more conscious of their rights, more educated, more economically productive, and more active and self-confident in every walk of life. They are fighting against all kinds of injustice and prejudices – both old and new. They also want to contribute equally to nation building.

Women's political empowerment, in particular, has no longer remained a pious aspiration or a rhetorical slogan. It is knocking itself at the doors of our Parliament. We are proud that the BJP was the first party to have demanded 33 percent reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures way back in 1987 at the Baroda National Executive meeting.

Ever since assuming office at the Centre, our Government has been making concerted efforts to create a consensus on early passage of this radical amendment to the Constitution. Unfortunately, this consensus has eluded us so far. I urge the Government to intensify its efforts at consensus building on this issue. Should these efforts fail due to the intransigence of certain political parties, who in any case are in no position to block its passage, the Government should go ahead with its plans nevertheless.

As far as our women's representation in our Party is concerned, we have made considerable progress in the past decade. However,

this is clearly not enough. If one-third of the elected representatives in Parliament and State Legislatures are going to be women, and if one-third of the members in Panchayati Raj institutions are already women – and they are giving a very good account of themselves – should not our Party have more than this proportion of women as members, active workers, and office-bearers?

I need hardly stress the point that it is far more difficult for women to be active in public and political life than it is for men. They face difficulties within their families, and in society. Sadly, often times they also face difficulties within the Party. It is our duty to remove all the hurdles in the path of greater participation of women in our Party's activities. I urge all our Party units at all levels to encourage the activities of our Mahila Morcha fully. We should give more recognition and more responsibilities to our active women workers. We should especially try to bring more women belonging to dalit, adivasi, OBC, minority, and other disadvantaged groups into positions of leadership.

I also urge our sisters in the Mahila Morcha to expand the range of their programmes, network closely with women's organisations of other Parties on common issues, and work closely with non-political women's groups that are doing commendable work on so many issues all over the country.

Youth: The Hope and Energy of Our Party

As we hold the first National Council meeting of the Party in the new century, I cannot but mention one of the most dominant features of our Party and our country in the 21st century. India's future belongs to her youth; and India itself has become a youthful nation. Nearly seventy per cent of our population is less than 35 years of age. This single fact makes it imperative that we reorient the nation's development process to benefit every young man and woman, and to ensure that they are able to participate fully in it.

As anyone can see, today the BJP too is a youthful Party. Our Party has attracted a larger number of youth in the past fifteen years than any other party in the country. It holds the greatest appeal for all sections of the Indian youth – rural as well as urban, educated, as well as not-so-educated. This appeal transcends the barriers of caste, class, community, gender, and region. All of us

know that it is the enthusiastic participation of the youth in large numbers in our political activities, agitations, and electoral campaigns that has helped the BJP to attain today's pre-eminence in Indian politics.

In the years to come, we must further strengthen our bond with India's youth. We should give greater recognition to the contributions of our young workers. The promising and hard working among them should be given greater responsibilities. Senior leaders should make conscious and sustained efforts to groom them to become tomorrow's leaders.

I congratulate the Yuva Morcha on its contribution to the growth of the Party. I urge its members to expand their activities with redoubled zeal and determination.

Sanrachana: Time to fulfil our Commitment to Constructive Activity

Dear Delegates, when our Party was established in 1980, our founding President, Shri Atalji had given a three-point slogan for party building at the historic convention in Mumbai. The slogan was: *Sangathan* (organisation), *Sangharsh* (struggle), and *Sanrachana* (constructive activity). We have carried out the first two tasks admirably. However, we have to admit that we have largely neglected the third task.

It was our continuous effort to create public awareness about issues like pseudo-secularism, national integration, national security, corruption of the people in power, the fundamental flaws in the model of economic development pursued by successive governments since Independence, that made the political atmosphere in the country conducive for the establishment of a BJP-led government. However, we need not limit ourselves only to the task of political education and agitation.

One of the meanings of our claim that ours is a Party with a difference lies in our resolve to bring about radical and comprehensive transformation of our society. While other parties go to the people only for seeking votes and do not interact with them between one election and another, or interact only for political purposes, merely doing this cannot satisfy the BJP. Our leaders and workers should continuously engage themselves in the task

of educating the people on various issues of vital national interest. They should involve themselves in a wide range of constructive activities that are apolitical in nature, although these may, and often will, yield political dividends for our Party.

Be it running a school, a cooperative, a charitable hospital, or running a sanitation programme, there are any number of such constructive activities that afford opportunities for our workers to lead or to participate in. Political and social action by our *karyakartas* need not be on a grand scale. Small, micro-level initiatives go a long way in comprehensively transforming our society.

Let every village committee of our Party resolve that in the next few months it will see that no form of untouchability or discrimination based on one's birth into a caste is practised in its area of operation. Let every *karyakarta* take the pledge that in the coming one year in his mohalla, every illiterate person will be turned into a functional literate. Let us all resolve that in the purview of our respective Party units, there shall be no harassment of women for dowry. Let us see to it that in our respective areas of work, no elderly person becomes a destitute for want of familial and societal care. I believe that these tasks should form our enlarged agenda.

Especially our *morchas* could play a vital role in carrying out this enlarged agenda. Within a year, let it be said by the people that because of the constructive intervention of the local BJP unit, there is no practice of untouchability in their village; there is not a single illiterate person in their mohalla; that there is not a single uncared for elderly person; that there is no single instance of dowry harassment. If our *karyakartas* can spare a few hours a week and a few days in a month, these goals are not difficult to achieve.

The goodwill that we generate by doing so for ourselves and for our Party is often more enduring than is created by political action. It also creates and nurtures idealism and a sense of social service among our workers. Fellow delegates, I invite ideas and suggestions from all of you on how we can organize *sanrachana* as an integral part of the Party's overall structure, so that we can effectively contribute to the gigantic task of social

transformation.

Our vision: The Bharatiya Janata Party – Bharat in Microcosm

Friends, our Party is going through a generational transition. Newer, and especially younger, members are joining the Party in large numbers. Younger activists are also assuming greater responsibilities in the organisation. We should blend the idealism and experience of senior leaders and the energy of young entrants to continue our Party's proud tradition into the new century.

In the next three years, we have to work hard so that the message of our Party reaches every habitation of this vast and great country. We should strive to have a vibrant unit in every panchayat. Many more women will have to be made members of our Party and given responsibilities in the organization. As I have stated earlier, we have to make a special effort to eliminate the hiatus between our Party and the minority communities.

Our Party should be a true reflection of the social, regional, linguistic and religious diversity of our country. No section in our society should feel excluded or alienated from the Party. Every section should feel convinced that their genuine interests are safe in the hands of the BJP and that our political programme addresses them earnestly.

In short, Bharatiya Janata Party should become Bharat in microcosm.

Conclusion

Dear Colleagues and Friends, before I conclude, I wish to once again thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for electing me to the highest office of the Party. I assure you that I shall spare no effort to live up to your expectations. I accept this heavy responsibility in the certainty that I shall receive unstinted guidance from all my senior leaders and support and cooperation from all of you.

Ours is a young Party that has just completed its twenty years. It is natural in this youthful age for us to dream big and to resolve to work hard to make our dreams come true. In this, we seek no other reward than the glory of Mother India. We expect nothing for ourselves and everything for the great people of this great Nation.

This ancient Nation of ours has just begun its journey into the new century. Ours was a land of prosperity, happiness, social peace, and cultural eminence long before the present calendar began to count its first century. If history inflicted reverses in our journey as a nation, we can now more than reverse these reverses to take India to new milestones of greatness.

Let *Charaiyeti, Charaiyeti* (March on, March on) be our motto. Let us pledge not to rest until each one of us has made his or her fullest contribution to this sacred task. Let us recall to ourselves the stirring words of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay at the conclusion of his thesis on Integral Humanism:

“We have to undertake the task of awakening our nation’s *Virat*. Let us start carrying on this task of awakening the *Virat* of the nation with a high sense of pride in our hoary glorious past, taking a realistic assessment of the present and having a great

ambition for the future. We wish neither to make this country a shadow of some distant past nor an imitation of Russia and America.

With the support of the Universal knowledge and our heritage, we shall create a Bharat, which will excel all its past glories, and will enable every citizen in its fold to develop his manifold latent potentialities and to achieve, through a sense of unity with the entire creation, a state even higher than that of a complete human being. It is a state in which *Nar* (Man) becomes *Narayan* (God). This is the eternal and continuous divine form of our culture. This is our message to humanity at the crossroads. May God give us the strength to succeed in this task."

Thank you!
Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

01 October, 2000

Dear Colleagues,

Friends, I welcome you all to the first meeting of the newly constituted National Executive.

Impact of the Nagpur Message

The nation is still discussing our Party's Nagpur message. The media, both national and international, continue to analyse and critically comment on it, devoting acres of newsprint and several hours of airtime.

Reactions from our political adversaries – mainly the Congress and the Communist parties – are predictably uncharitable and graceless. In fact, their comments betrayed their sense of panic. Probably they have read the writing on the wall: the Nagpur session of the BJP National Council has sounded the deathknell for their cynical practice of vote bank politics.

The great Indian people, however, have received the Nagpur message with the warmth and enthusiasm that has exceeded our own expectation. Especially, common people from among the Minorities, Dalits, Adivasis, the Other Backward Castes have responded positively to our Party's message. The thousands of letters and messages that I received in the past one month bear a clear testimony to the goodwill that is welling up in these sections towards our party.

I have personally met a countless number of Muslim, Dalit, Adivasi and OBC delegations. They have specially come to meet me to say that they welcome our Party's Nagpur message. The

enthusiasm that is displayed by the people at the public meetings during my tours in the past weeks convince me that they are ready to tear down the wall of separation that years of false propaganda erected between many of them and us.

We must continuously strive to further expand and deepen our support base, so that the BJP consolidates its growth as a pre-eminent national party on a sustainable basis. I would like the Party workers to vigorously propagate the 10-point Action Plan for promoting Social and Economic Justice for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs, which I outlined in my Presidential Address at Nagpur.

I would also like you to deliberate and evolve a set of practical measures for consolidating the goodwill towards us that is evident among those sections of the minorities who have so far remained indifferent to our appeal. I am confident that our sincere and sustained efforts will succeed in changing the relationship between our party and Indian Muslims for mutual benefit and for the larger benefit of India.

Prime Minister's us visit

I would like to place on record the Party's deep appreciation of the recent visit of our beloved Prime Minister, Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to the United Nations and to the United States. It was historic by any reckoning.

At the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, Atalji's call for the establishment of an equitable and conflict-free world clearly and cogently expressed the global aspiration for the new century. The Prime Minister's persuasive advocacy for mobilising International opinion against terrorism, especially State-sponsored cross-border terrorism, sent the right warning to the evil forces that are trying to subvert our national unity, integrity and social harmony.

Thanks to India's consistent diplomatic efforts, there is today a growing recognition in the world that terrorism is a threat to the peaceful and civilized global order, and that a collective global effort alone can combat it effectively.

The Prime Minister's visit to Washington has led to further appreciation by the US leadership of India's view point and concerns. It has brightened the prospects of substantial investments

from the US, in our country, increase in bilateral trade, and co-operation in the fields of economic development and scientific research. The ground for the formal lifting of all sanctions against India has been cleared.

Russian President's visit

The visit of the Russian President, beginning tomorrow will further strengthen the traditional friendship between India and Russia. The Strategic Partnership Agreement to be signed by the two countries is of great long-term significance for both of us.

Congress Culture Convicted

The special court trying the JMM case found the former Prime Minister Shri PV Narasimha Rao guilty of bribing MPs to vote in favour of his government to win the no-confidence motion. The Congress Party might try to disown, or distance itself from, Shri Rao to salvage some of its lost moral ground. But the incontrovertible fact is that it is a judgement convicting not merely him as an individual, but the entire Congress Party and its culture of resorting to every corrupt means to cling to power. The country should not lose sight of this crucial import of the judgement.

Get Ready for the Upcoming Assembly Polls

Friends, the Party will soon face crucial elections to the Assemblies in several States. The terms of legislatures in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Punjab are going to come to an end in about a year. In addition, of the three newly created states, Uttaranchal will have to elect its legislature.

We must be victorious in all the States going to the polls, singly or with our partners in the National Democratic Alliance. We have no time to lose. We must begin our preparations in right earnest from now itself. We need to ready our organisational machinery in these states to face the challenge. The concerned State units should begin to organise mass contact programmes. We need to undertake a thorough review of our performance in the last two Lok Sabha elections and unhesitatingly learn from any mistakes that we might have made.

The situation is favourable to us. Our Party enjoys considerable

goodwill. Our Government at the Centre, under the able leadership of Shri Atalji, has set a new benchmark of performance. Our Party has a very clear and comprehensive programme for development. We must gear up our Party machinery to propagate our performance and achievements and fight this electoral battle with the determination to win. We must not let any hesitation and half-heartedness weaken our unity and resolve at any level.

Up: Let us work for Regaining People's Mandate

I am confident that such a positive attitude will pay us rich dividends in Uttar Pradesh. As we all know, the opposition parties in the State present a picture of utter disunity and disarray. Unlike many of them, our Party's support base embraces all sections of society and covers all regions of the State.

The enthusiastic response I received during my recent visit to Kanpur convinces me that the people of the State are with the BJP. The State Party President Shri Kalraj Mishra's mass-contact yatra has also created a very positive atmosphere, once again reminding us that there is no alternative to hard work and political mobilisation at the grassroots.

Let us, therefore, get our act together to beat the so called 'anti-incumbency syndrome' and renew our mandate in Uttar Pradesh.

Situation in West Bengal

I express our Party's condolences to all those who lost their kith and kin and suffered other forms of loss in the recent floods in West Bengal.

The havoc caused by the floods in the State has once again highlighted the misrule of the Left Front Government. Although floods are the result of Nature's fury, the damage has been aggravated by the criminal neglect of flood-control measures by the State Government year after year. Our *karyakartas* should participate fully in the relief and rehabilitation activities. At the same time, they should educate the people about the Left Front Government's acts of omission and commission. They should also expose its consistent failure even to fully utilise the developmental funds made available by the Centre, because of its inability to

provide matching resources owing to the bankruptcy of its exchequer.

The State is going to the polls in a few months. It is eagerly waiting to finally liberate itself from the long misrule of the CPI(M). The people there are ready to give a mandate to the Trinamool Congress-BJP alliance. Precisely because they are faced with the certainty of an ignominious defeat, the Communists have become panicky and desperate to retain power by any means, fair or foul.

The political as well as law and order situation in West Bengal is alarming. Political activists of opposition parties, especially those belonging to the Trinamool Congress and BJP, are being murdered by the ruling party workers. Even ordinary people who do not fall in line with the dictates of the local bosses of the CPI(M) are physically assaulted and harassed. I express our Party's heartfelt condolences to the families of all the political activists who lost their lives at the hands of the Communist goons.

It is very clear that the Left Front is not able to face the mounting opposition to its malgovernance. The people have seen through the methods of "scientific rigging" adopted by the left front in all the past elections. The gruesome violence perpetrated by the cadres of the ruling party is, therefore, a last-ditch attempt by them to stop the relentless erosion of their support base.

During my visit to the State last fortnight, I have met several people who have become refugees in their own villages. Their condition is pathetic. They want the Union Government to intervene suitably to restore the rule of law in the State. They look to the Union Government for succour.

Winds of change in Assam

Last fortnight, I visited Assam. The people's hunger for change is clearly visible in the State. They are thoroughly disillusioned with the AGP Government. The opportunism of the AGP leadership has been fully exposed. Not only has it failed to contain the ULFA and other extremist forces, but there is also a well-grounded suspicion among the people that it is soft towards the misdeeds of SULFA. The people of the State are also well aware of the opportunism and infighting in the Congress.

There is, thus, a new opening for us in Assam. The people

look to our Party with great hope. I urge the State unit of the Party to seize the opportunity by mobilising the entire army of our workers and supporters in the forthcoming electoral battle.

Best Wishes to the Prime Minister

Friends, I conclude by expressing, on your behalf and on my own behalf, our very best wishes to our beloved Shri Atalji as he prepares to undergo a surgery on his knee in Mumbai on 10 October. I am confident that he will come back in better health to continue to lead the nation on the path of all-round progress.

Thank you!
Vande Mataram!





Presidential Speeches

SHRI KUSHABHAU THAKRE

National Executive

New Delhi

15-17 April, 2000

Dear friends,

I welcome you all to this meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party's National Executive.

We are meeting at a historic and proud moment in our Party's history. Earlier this month, on 6 April, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of the BJP.

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which was formed in 1951 and whose political legacy we have inherited, had joined hands with other Opposition parties to form the Janata Party in 1977 in order to offer a national alternative to the people and to save democracy. Unfortunately, that experiment failed and we came out in 1980, under the leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to form the BJP.

I recall Shri Vajpayee's stirring words at the first National Council meeting of the BJP in Mumbai:

"We can organise the people only if we are able to establish our credibility in their minds. The people must feel convinced that here is a party different from the crowd of selfseekers who swamp the political stage, that its aim is not to somehow sneak into office and that its politics is based on certain values and principles ... Standing on the shores of the Arabian Sea beneath the Western Ghats, I can say this with confidence about the future: Darkness will be dispelled, the sun will rise and the Lotus will bloom."

Those words provided us with strength and inspiration during the early years when we had to face many ups and downs. At no stage did we lose heart. On the contrary, we gradually built up

our Organisation and won over the confidence and trust of the people.

Today, we are the largest political party in the country with more than two crore members. We are the largest Party in Parliament. We are the leading member of the ruling National Democratic Alliance. Shri Vajpayee, the founder President of the BJP, is the Prime Minister and the tallest leader in the country. Much of the credit for this goes to the hard work and dedication of our workers, the support and assistance which we have received from our friends and the faith reposed in us by the people.

On behalf of the entire leadership of the Party, I express deep gratitude to them.

This is no doubt a moment to celebrate. But it is also an occasion to take stock of the past and prepare for the future. In short, for introspection – so that we can build on our strengths and prepare ourselves for the tasks that lie ahead of us.

I look forward to fruitful discussion in this regard. I would urge you to focus on the future and on how we can further strengthen our organisation by consolidating the gains of the last two decades, especially the last two years. The last three general elections have seen a major shift in Indian politics with the Congress losing its position as the dominant political force and suffering continuous erosion in its electoral strength. In the, bi-polar polity that has emerged, the BJP is the stronger of the two dominant poles, the Congress being the other, albeit weaker, pole.

The new polity, as we see it emerging, revolves around what could be described as the politics of three 'C's – Coalition, consensus and cooperation. The previous polity revolved around the politics of a single 'C' – namely, confrontation. That era is definitely over, though, and regrettably so, the Congress and the Communists are yet to reconcile themselves with the passing away of their brand of politics.

The new polity has definitely placed a greater responsibility on our shoulders. Not merely because we are the largest Party and are in power, but because we believe in a larger purpose – that of serving the nation and the people. Our allies in the NDA enable us to serve this larger purpose. Their regional perspective forms the mosaic of the NDA Government's national outlook. This

is a Government that is truly representative of the entire nation and in this lies its strength.

The 'Chennai Declaration', which was adopted at the National Council meeting in December last year, is a clear enunciation of our new thinking for the new century within the matrix of our ideology and values. The success of the National Democratic Alliance will depend, in a large measure, on how well we are able to fulfil our responsibilities in the new polity. That success will depend on your actively translating the 'Chennai Declaration' into reality.

Assembly Elections: The first test. The most important development since we last met in Chennai has been the Assembly elections in Orissa, Bihar, Manipur and Haryana. We did well in the first three States - in Orissa, there has been a four-fold increase in our strength; in Bihar we have nearly doubled our tally; and, in Manipur we have won six seats.

We are partners in the new Government in Orissa. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, which we will discuss at this meeting, the NDA was unable to get a clear majority in Bihar. Our battle against the corrupt, criminal and casteist Laloo-Rabri regime in Bihar, however, is far from over. We shall continue our struggle to free the people from the jungle raj in Bihar. In Haryana we fared poorly, the reasons for which we should look into.

The Congress, of course, has once again suffered major reverses in this round of elections. But it is yet to learn any lessons, as is evident from the manner in which the party has joined hands with the RJD for crumbs of office. This is not tactics, but a gross display of total lack of ethics and morality.

Our success in the Assembly polls has had a positive impact on the recent biennial Rajya Sabha elections. The BJP's strength in the Upper House has increased and, to that extent, the task of the Government has become slightly easier in Parliament.

Here I would like to mention the despicable methods used by certain individuals, who happen to have access to money power, to win Rajya Sabha elections. Cross-voting, irrespective of which party stands to lose from it, is a blot on our polity as it is nothing short of abusing the system of secret ballot for personal gains. This is perversion of democracy.

We need to look into this debasement and abuse of secret voting and consider ways and means of tackling the problem. The Election Commission, too, should take serious note of this perversion and seek the opinion of all parties on possible cures for this malady.

President Clinton's Visit: Beginning of a New Chapter
American President Bill Clinton's visit to India last month marks the start of a new chapter in relations between India and the USA, the world's two largest democracies. It also marks a new willingness on part of the USA to appreciate and understand India's concerns which, in the past, have gone largely unnoticed.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the USA has opted for a closer and qualitatively new relationship with India. It is only natural that India and the USA should be partners in the promotion of shared values like peace and democracy. The Vision Statement is an affirmation of the immense potential of such a partnership, especially in maintaining regional and international security as well as in enhanced cooperation, especially in the areas that constitute the 'New Economy'.

The outcome of President Clinton's visit is yet another example of the successful conduct of foreign policy and resolute pursuit of national security interests by the NDA Government.

India's position on the need to check Pakistan's policy of cross-border terrorism finds continuing support from countries across the world. On the other hand, Pakistan continues to face increasing isolation in the international community. The document adopted at the NAM Foreign Ministers' meeting in Cartagena is further proof that there are few supporters of military regimes in today's world.

We must, however, continue to maintain constant vigil against Pakistan and its evil policy of cross-border terrorism. The massacre of 35 Sikhs in Kashmir shows that the Pakistan-backed terrorists are getting increasingly desperate and more murderous in their campaign of terror. It also calls for tighter security measures in order to prevent a fresh round of ethnic cleansing in the Kashmir Valley.

The Government has done the right thing by insisting that no meaningful talks are possible with Pakistan till such time

Islamabad gives up its policy of cross-border terrorism which poses a threat to peace and stability not only in India but in the entire region. Indeed, cross-border terrorism is a threat to open and free societies all over the world. I welcome the Government's initiative for institutionalising concerted international action against terrorism through a UN mechanism.

Budget 2000: State of the Economy. There has been some criticism of this year's Central Budget on account of cutback in subsidies. We need to look at the Budget and its provisions in the overall context of today's economic situation.

Carrying the burden of subsidies beyond a point is virtually impossible for any Government. What is needed is focused spending on the poor and this will be possible only when there are cutbacks on massive general spendings.

Also, it needs to be explained to the people that subsidy bills get carried over till tomorrow. So, while they get subsidy today, it is their children who have to bear the burden of the expenditure tomorrow. This is hardly conducive to a healthy economy.

There are other aspects, too, that influence Government policy and over which the country has no control. For instance, if world oil prices rise, then our oil bill automatically shoots up. It would be unfair to expect the Government to pick up this bill.

Our task is two-fold. First, we need to explain to the people that some harsh decisions may have to be taken to correct the distortions in our economy. This is similar to a patient being administered strong medicines so that he can recover fully and be restored to health.

Second, we should vigorously project the positive outcome of the Government's initiatives. These are too many to be listed here, but the first thing that comes to mind is the extremely low rate of inflation that has been maintained for nearly two years now. Let us also project the rural development initiatives of the Government as well as the fact that much more is being spent today on human development than ever before.

Tasks Ahead: The organisational elections of our Party, currently underway, will be over by May. Yet once again the BJP has demonstrated its commitment to inner-party democracy by holding organisational elections on time. I can only compare this

to the reluctance of the Congress to hold organisational elections, the reasons for which are too obvious to be stated.

I would like to list four tasks for Party workers as we enter our 21st year in the 21st century:

1. Expand further our political, organisational and electoral base so as to emerge as the most powerful political force in the country. Let us make the BJP into a truly mass party. Every unit's and every *karyakarta's* dedication, efforts, vision and attitude must get further strengthened.
2. Understand the changing political scenario and in this context strengthen our ties with our allies in the NDA in order to defeat the nefarious designs of the Opposition parties.
3. Mobilise support for Government initiatives wherever we are in power – both at the Centre and in the States – explaining to the masses the various steps taken by our Government to find solutions to the problems facing the people in the background of harsh realities of the present situation.
4. Carry our message of patriotism and nationalism to all members of the Great Indian Family, especially those sections of our society to whom we have not yet been able to reach out.

Before I conclude, I would urge all of you to look at the future with confidence and faith – faith in the strength and conviction of our workers and well-wishers, faith in the people whose support has brought us to this point in our Party's history.

If we are able to march along the path that we charted for ourselves when we embarked upon our journey to provide a better alternative to the masses, then the future is surely ours.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Bangalore

2-3 January, 1999

I welcome you all to this session of the Bharatiya Janata Party's National Executive.

Day before yesterday, 1998 drew to a close, drawing the curtains on a tumultuous year of major and significant developments on the national scene. In this past year, for the first time in its independent history, India voted in a truly non-Congress Government under the leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. If that marked an unprecedented shift in national politics, the May nuclear tests announced India's arrival as a nation whose scientific achievement was no less than that of the developed world.

Our critics had first discounted all chances of our forming a Government at the Centre. When they saw that this was inevitable, they discounted all chances of the Government's survival. We have not only survived but, given the limitations and compulsions of a coalition Government, proved our capacity to deliver through our actions.

For all of us, 1998 will remain a memorable year. I am confident that 1999, the last year before we enter the 21st century, will be more fruitful - both for the nation and the party.

Assembly Elections: A Setback, but we'll Overcome

We last met at Jaipur in August end. Since then, the political situation has changed a great deal. In the November Assembly elections, we had hoped to retain power in Rajasthan and Delhi,

wrest power from the Congress in Madhya Pradesh and send our maiden MLA, if not more, to the Mizoram Assembly.

Many Seats Lost by a Narrow Margin

The results of the Assembly elections, however, were contrary to our expectations. A minute scrutiny of votes secured by us, for instance, in Madhya Pradesh where the percentage difference in votes was 1.3 per cent, will show that the BJP has not lost too much ground. Indeed, in many constituencies we lost by a narrow margin of less than a couple of hundred votes. However, the bottom line is that victory eluded us.

Defeat in an election can be a painful experience, especially when it involves loss of governments. But, and I would like to stress this point, an electoral setback, no matter how severe, cannot be a full stop. It is at best a comma, affording us a chance to learn lessons from the defeat and convert the challenge into an opportunity. Results of one round of elections cannot be a final judgement; indeed, finality is not the language of politics.

We must Rededicate ourselves to our Noble Mission

In this context, it would be worthwhile recalling what Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee said in his first presidential address to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh on 21 October, 1951: "Elections have no doubt an importance of their own... (but) whatever may be the result of the elections, our party must however continue to function thereafter, carrying a message of hope and goodwill to all classes of people and trying to draw out from them their best efforts in re-building a happier and more prosperous India."

We have to re-energise our organisation, rededicate ourselves to our noble mission and regain the ground we have lost. This meeting affords us an opportunity to discuss the reasons behind the party's poor performance. Over the next two days, we will do that with the intention of learning from our defeat and moving forward, firm in our resolve to win in the next round of elections.

Some Obvious Reasons

If I were to list the principal reasons why we fared so poorly, they would be the voters' pre-occupation with immediate problems, especially the backbreaking rise in the prices of some essential commodities, and the perceived delay in Government's response in containing them, as well as the anti-incumbency factor that worked against us in the two States where we were in power.

Individualism

Coupled with these were organisational deficiencies and the unfortunate tendency among some of us to put ourselves above the party's interests. Indeed, this is singularly unfortunate because we have a long tradition of placing the party's interests above that of individuals. We have to face this challenge and correct the malady.

We must not Lose our Identity

Let us not forget that the BJP is, and shall remain, a party with a difference. We cannot afford to lose sight of this identity. If we were to become just another party and win elections, those victories would be of little consequence and even less solace to crores of people who have all these decades sustained our hopes and aspirations with their unstinted support.

The Emerging Political Scenario

These rounds of Assembly elections have had a three-fold political fallout. First, the Congress, which had been left greatly debilitated by successive defeats in two general elections, has emerged looking stronger than before. Second, the Congress revival has spelled doom for the Marxist dream of a grand umbrella alliance of non-BJP parties. Third, the BJP and the Congress appear to be emerging as the two principal poles of Indian politics.

Negative Vote for Congress

Victory for the Congress after its run of poor electoral performance in State and general elections has no doubt contributed to reviving the party. But, it would be in order to mention that notwithstanding the Congress' own interpretation of the voting

pattern, it was definitely not a positive vote for the Congress. It gained from a negative vote influenced by the factors I have already enumerated. It was definitely not a mandate against our agenda or policies on the whole.

With the revival of the Congress, we are once again witness to those very traits that contributed to its decline. Congress slogans once again centre around unabashed promotion of "dynasty" over democracy and the ridiculous claim that it "has the natural right to rule". Victory in three Assembly elections cannot wash away the sins of the Congress nor wipe out the spots of corruption that taint the party's leadership.

Dubious Role of the Left Parties

The attitude of the Marxists and Communists towards the Congress before, during and after the Assembly elections has exposed the dubious role the Left parties continue to play in Indian politics. That their dubious role has been exposed augurs well for the future of the country.

The last component of the emerging political scenario is a welcome development. The emergence of rank casteist and communal outfits masquerading as political parties had fragmented both our society and polity. Their appeal now appears to be on the wane. If the BJP and the Congress finally emerge as the two main poles, it would definitely stabilise the polity and halt the process of fragmentation.

Feeling the Pulse of the People

I have earlier mentioned the perception among people that the Government did not respond with alacrity and promptness in tackling their immediate problems, especially the rise in prices of essential commodities. The perception may not be based on facts, but it cannot be denied that this did play a role when the voters exercised their choice in the recent Assembly elections.

Failure to Communicate with the People

In a sense, it was a collective failure - both the party's as well as the Government's. We were unable to effectively communicate to the people the reasons behind, and the transitory nature of, the

price rise. The Government could not accurately feel the pulse of the people.

In Gandhinagar, I had mentioned the need for the party to serve as a bridge connecting the Government with the masses and have a constant feel of the pulse of the people. To construct such a bridge, there is need for greater interaction and coordination between the Government and the party; the two are no doubt separate identities and the party should definitely not become a part of the establishment, but both have a complementary role to play.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay once said that a party in power acquires a distinctive identity by tackling big problems. But its distinctive strength lies in tackling small problems. I hope that the Government will follow Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay's guidance.

We cannot Afford to be Complacent

In short, we have to constantly strive, whether or not we are in power, to be identified with the masses. The party cannot afford to be complacent, leaving this task to the Government.

When I refer to greater interaction, coordination and collaboration between party and Government, I view it as a pragmatic means of communicating to the Government promptly and precisely popular aspirations and perceptions. This is something that the bureaucracy can never do. It is also a means of communicating effectively to the people the Government's performance and the compulsions within which it has to perform. I have no doubt that the two together can fetch us enormous benefits - not merely in terms of votes, but in expanding the base of our goodwill.

Need for Effective Communication between Party and Government

There is, of course, the other point - active coordination and effective consultation can pre-empt embarrassment and confusion for both the Government and the party. Two recent examples come to my mind - the IRA Bill and the Patents Bill.

There was some confusion over the Government's decision on both these issues which was in conflict with the party's stand

and the National Agenda for Governance. Subsequently, when the Government's position was explained to our MPs, they understood the situation better and the passage of the Bills was facilitated. This shows that effective communication can remove confusion and misgivings.

Misguided Secularists and their Politics

Two developments in recent months merit comment. The first is the fracas at the Education Ministers' Conference where some Ministers belonging to the Congress, Left and other non-BJP parties, raising the bogey of "secularism", protested against the rendering of Saraswati Vandana.

Saraswati Vandana

The fact that at the first Education Ministers' Conference under the chairmanship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and as recently as at an official function in 1997, attended by the President and the then Prime Minister, Shri IK Gujral, the Saraswati Vandana was rendered, goes to show that it is blind anti-BJPism which is behind the hue and cry raised at last year's Education Ministers' Conference.

Vande Mataram

The second development is the objection to Vande Mataram. During the freedom struggle, Vande Mataram was the one song, the one battle cry, that inspired people to lay down their lives and accept harsh imprisonment for the cause of their motherland's freedom. Today, 50 years after independence, there are people who feel offended by the National Song. What a fall!

Christian Community

An unrelated development, though linked to the issue of secularism, is the charge that a grand conspiracy is afoot against India's Christian community. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There have been some sporadic incidents which are condemnable. I welcome the action taken by the BJP-led Government in this regard.

For long there has been an effort to create a gulf between the minority communities and the BJP by spreading misinformation about us. It is, therefore, our duty to frustrate these attempts and bring together all peoples, irrespective of their caste, religion, gender and language.

International Developments and Foreign Policy Initiatives

Nuclear Tests

In these last 10 months, the BJP-led Government has successfully handled foreign policy issues and the fallout of Pokhran-II. It is regrettable that some foreign Governments continue to fail to understand the rationale behind the nuclear tests. The Government has done well by undertaking a concerted diplomatic campaign with several countries to put the nuclear tests in their right perspective and persist with India's long-standing demand for a time-bound universal elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

I am confident that this Government will safeguard legitimate national concerns in the discussions related to CTBT. Any decision on this issue should follow only after the party and Parliament have been taken into confidence. The Prime Minister has already given an assurance in this regard.

Air-strikes Against Iraq

The Anglo-US air-strikes against Iraq were entirely uncalled for and unjustified. On behalf of the party, I deplore them. Neither the USA nor the UK has the right to arrogate to itself the authority of the UN. It was, and remains, the UN's prerogative to decide how best to tackle the issue: the multilateral system cannot be short-circuited by those who see themselves as the "sole power".

Russia & Sri Lanka

Russia's offer of a strategic alliance is a welcome move and the Government should actively pursue it. The Indo-Sri Lankan agreement on free trade is an excellent achievement for which credit goes to this Government and the Prime Minister for his personal initiative.

Pakistan

The resumption of India-Pakistan bilateral dialogue augurs well for sub-continental peace and tranquillity. However, the process could be derailed if Pakistan persists with its anti-India activities through the ISI and its agents. The Government must demand a full halt to such trans-border subversive activities.

Tasks Ahead

We have four tasks ahead of us. First, the party cannot become captive to immediate compulsions – we have to look ahead and **prepare ourselves for future challenges**. Second, we have to strive hard for not only recovering the lost ground but also **expanding our support base** by concentrating on the deprived and weaker sections of society – we must identify ourselves with their concerns and aspirations without indulging in casteist politics of any manner. Third, we have to **actively collaborate with our Governments** – wherever we are in power, be it at the Centre or in the States – to fetch maximum relief to people's immediate problems. Fourth, let us all resolve to **overcome the setback in the recent elections** by performing exceedingly well in the coming round of Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa and Sikkim. We can do it if we work shoulder to shoulder and bear in mind the party's interest as opposed to individual interests.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Panaji

2-4 April, 1999

I welcome you all to this session of the party's National Executive.

We are meeting at a time that is significant on three counts:

- The Bharatiya Janata Party-led Union Government, under the able leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has just completed its first year in office.
- In another four days, our party will be completing 19 eventful years that saw our emergence as India's largest party and the only alternative to the Congress, and entering its 20th year.
- Our ancient nation has just entered a new century, the 52nd of the Kaliyug, even as the rest of the world prepares to enter the third millennium.

A Satisfying Year of Success

A year ago, when this Government took charge, our political opponents had ominously predicted its collapse before the year would be over. We have proved our detractors wrong. It is with great pride and satisfaction that we celebrate this Government's successful completion of first year in office.

It has no doubt been a tumultuous year. Shri Vajpayee has had to navigate his Government through obstacles raised by an Opposition bent upon bringing governance to a halt and the difficulties created by the sanctions imposed in the wake of the May 1998 nuclear tests.

Notwithstanding those obstacles and difficulties, we can look back with satisfaction at the year gone by. Not only has the Government performed exceedingly well and introduced path-breaking policy initiatives on wide-ranging issues, it has nursed the national economy, so badly bruised by the policies of the Congress and UF Governments, back to health. As Asian and Latin American economies tumbled like nine pins this past year, the Indian economy, especially the agriculture sector, defying all opinion, registered a sizeable growth.

A Very Purposeful Budget

This year's Budget reflects the Government's continued commitment to changing the thrust of India's national development programme so that growth also ensures higher levels of human development and creation of employment opportunities. I am sure that the Budget will further strengthen India socially and economically.

Three factors have contributed to the BJP-led Government's successful first year in office.

- The first is **Shri Vajpayee's leadership**: Leading the Government from the front, he has demonstrated both vision and action.
- The second is the **sincerity** with which every Minister of this Government has tended to his or her responsibility in implementing the National Agenda for Governance.
- The third is the **commitment** of our allies to the success of this Government and in defeating the designs of the Congress and the Leftists.

There were occasions when perceptual differences among our allies did come in the way of smooth functioning. However, over these past 12 months we have been able to establish a better understanding with our allies, strengthening the bonds of our umbrella alliance. The hiccups of the first year are behind us. I would like to thank all our allies and friends, both in and outside Government, for making our dream of good governance come true.

Prime Minister's Historic Lahore Visit

Friends, we are meeting against the immediate backdrop of two major developments—one external and the other internal. Both of them have had a deep impact on the nation and the national political scene.

PM's Audacious Statesmanship

Shri Vajpayee displayed audacious statesmanship by visiting Lahore, thus opening a new chapter in India-Pakistan relations and ushering in an era of peace on the sub-continent. The historic Lahore Declaration and the goodwill generated by the visit are a tribute to the leadership of both Shri Vajpayee and the Pakistan Prime Minister, Mian Nawaz Sharif. Let us all congratulate them.

Peace through Strength

We must, however, bear in mind that history is not made by weak nations. It is only the strong who can forge peace. The nuclear tests of May 1998 at Pokhran symbolised India's emergence as a nation capable of defending its interests and taking care of its security concerns. It is from that position of strength that we have now embarked upon the journey to peace in our time. I recall Churchill's famous line: "In war: resolution... In peace: goodwill."

Let India and Pakistan leave behind them the bitterness of the last five decades and work towards a future of cooperation and friendship based on mutual goodwill.

Pakistan must Stop Terrorist Activities

In this context, I would like to point out that Pakistan, in order to demonstrate its commitment to sub-continental peace, must immediately cease assisting, through the ISI, terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir or any other State of India. In recent times, the peace that has been established in Jammu and Kashmir by the BJP-led Government has been marred by the massacre of Hindus by Islamic separatists in the hilly terrain of Jammu region.

I call upon the Government to take all steps to ensure the security of the people of that region. The tactics adopted by terrorists in Jammu are the same as those adopted by them in Kashmir. Their goal is the same, too – to force Hindus to flee their homes. The Union Government and the State Government should take urgent

steps to prevent mass migration of Hindus from Rajouri, Udhampur and other areas of Jammu so that the terrorist gameplan fails.

Congress backs Laloo-Rabri Jungle Raj...

Let me now come to the other development that has had a deep impact on national politics. It is the manner in which the Congress and the Left have thrown all political morality and ethics to the wind in their effort to somehow or the other destabilise the BJP-led Government.

Congress goes back on Panchmarhi Resolve

At its Panchmarhi conclave last year, the Congress had declared, with great fanfare, that it would not align with any casteist or communal party. It had also resolved to bide its time in the Opposition rather than take recourse to foul means to manoeuvre itself into power without a popular mandate.

Lends Support to Rabri Regime

However, ethics and Congress are as disparate as oil and water. Notwithstanding its declared commitment to ethical politics, the true colours of the Congress leadership were once again exposed over the issue of imposing President's rule in Bihar. The Panchmarhi declarations were thrown into the dustbin by the Congress leadership in its shameless eagerness to embarrass the Government.

A thoroughly Discredited Government

That the present Government in Bihar has lost all legitimacy and moral right to remain in power is known to all. It is also common knowledge that the writ of law does not run in Bihar – the people of the State live in terror of criminals sponsored by the Laloo-Rabri regime. The RJD Government has abdicated all responsibility and become a cheering spectator to the murder and mayhem that continue to claim a terrible toll of human lives.

In this situation, the only option before the BJP-led Government was to sack the incompetent and corrupt Laloo-Rabri regime and impose President's rule on Bihar to protect the lives of innocent citizens. The Government acted not in self-interest, but in the interest of the hapless people of that State, hoping that

the Congress, as a responsible Opposition party, would rise above partisan politics and support the move.

Congress Opposes President's rule in Bihar

In the event, the Congress turned out to be no better than a bunch of petty politicians willing to adopt petty means to achieve their petty ambitions. Defying public opinion that was overwhelmingly in favour of ridding Bihar of the Laloo-Rabri duo's jungle raj, the Congress went and joined hands with Laloo Prasad Yadav. Instead of standing by the people of Bihar, specially the Dalits, the Congress leadership joined hands with those responsible for the brutal bloodletting in Bihar. Entire villages continue to be wiped out in the dead of night as the Congress-backed Laloo-Rabri regime watches in silence, much like Nero fiddling while Rome burnt.

...Left Aligns with Bihar's Barbaric Regime

The Left parties, who have long said goodbye to ethics and morality, are equally to blame for the continuing jungle raj in Bihar. Rather than enable the demise of the corrupt, casteist and criminal regime in Patna, they have joined hands with it. Their anti-democratic, anti-Dalit character has brought them together with a morally bankrupt Congress and the Laloo-Rabri regime on a common anti-people platform.

It is laughable that the venerable Chief Minister of West Bengal, who misses no occasion to berate us as "barbaric", has no compunctions about the CPI(M), by association with the Laloo-Rabri regime, being a party to the barbarism in Bihar. It is duplicity at its worst when the CPI(M) proclaims its commitment to ethics even while aligning with what is clearly the most unethical and corrupt regime in the country today.

Congress has no use for Morality

The Congress leadership has lost all sense of righteousness. It has shown that it has nothing but contempt for morals, values and ethics. In its desperate hunt for power, the Congress leadership is willing to stoop to any level and take recourse to any means. A party that promotes dynasty over democracy

cannot but turn its face away from the plight of the people, as it has done in Bihar.

The refusal of the Congress to back President's rule in Bihar left the Government with no other option but to revoke the Presidential Proclamation. It is a matter of immeasurable regret that the people of Bihar are once again at the mercy of criminals and hoodlums. The Congress and the Left are solely to blame for this. We can derive some satisfaction from the fact that we have stood by the people of Bihar and continue to be with them in their struggle against the anti-people regime in Patna.

But some good always comes out of evil – in this case, the vote on the Presidential Proclamation on Bihar in the Lok Sabha enabled us to prove that we continue to enjoy majority support in the House of the People. Not only that, we have shown that we have increased our support in the Lok Sabha compared to the support we had when the Government sought a confidence vote a year ago when it assumed office.

Unlike Congress Rule, ours is a Clean Government

In the last days of the first half of the Budget session, we saw the Congress, the Left and other sundry Opposition parties stalling parliamentary proceedings on the most frivolous grounds. Their most laughable charge, of course, is of corruption – a charge based on the baseless fulmination of a naval chief sacked for defying civilian authority.

But then, I am not surprised. Having indulged in rampant corruption whenever it has been in power, making money even out of defence deals – for instance, the Bofors contract – the Congress cannot even imagine that something called clean and transparent governance is possible.

We are proud of the fact that ours is the cleanest Government India has had since Mrs. Indira Gandhi legitimised corruption, arguing that no Government in the world is free of corrupt practices. We have proved that it is possible for India to have a Government free of corruption.

Attempts to Destabilise the Government

The truth is that a power-hungry, desperate Congress leadership is straining itself too hard to destabilise this

Government in the mistaken belief that it will succeed in its misadventure. It is mistaken because unlike the previous Governments that have been brought down by the Congress, ours is not dependent on Congress support. We and our allies stand together, surviving on our own strength and the support of the people of India.

Alert against Pseudo-Secularists

Friends, recent events have shown that we cannot afford to lower our guard against the machinations of the pseudo-secularists. There is mischief afoot to paint a misleading picture about the condition of minority communities, especially Christians, through a motivated campaign of calumny. Both external and internal forces are involved in this campaign.

Spreading Outright Lies

There has been a lot of hue and cry about alleged incidents of atrocities against Christians. In most of these cases, it has been established that they were gross exaggerations or outright lies – for example, the so-called assault on a preacher in Allahabad and the burning of a Bible in Kerala. Our political opponents, at the bidding of external forces that want a more pliable Government in New Delhi, can be expected to go to any extent to paint us as "communal". It matters little to them that in the process they are harming the image of India abroad.

BJP will Uphold True Secular Traditions

Our party and our Government are committed to upholding the true secular traditions of our nation and our society. India is a multi-religious country and India's Constitution guarantees equal rights and equal safety to practitioners of all religions. We shall uphold that guarantee.

Whenever and wherever violations have occurred, this Government has acted in a fair and firm manner. The Government has set up a judicial inquiry to probe the despicable crime of burning a missionary and his two sons. I call upon all our workers to guard against rumour-mongers and mischief-makers.

Organisational Matters

I have mentioned earlier that we will soon complete 19 years. Since we launched the BJP on 6 April, 1980, our party has grown in size and geographic spread. In order to keep pace with the changed circumstances, for the last few years we have felt the need for fine-tuning our party Constitution. A committee has been set up for this purpose.

Fine-tuning the Party Constitution

In order to ensure that any amendments that may be mooted are comprehensive, I would urge all those who are involved with organisational affairs at the State level to forward their suggestions to the committee, bearing in mind the best interests of the party and not of individuals.

Spreading the Message

A second point I would like to make is about the need for us to reach out to more sections of people. We already have six morchas and various cells to facilitate this process. We can consider setting up more cells in order to reach out to those sections of our society that still remain outside our family.

Austerity and Dedication

We must remember at all times our organisation is known for austerity, simplicity, service and dedication. These are qualities that have made the BJP different from other parties. Let us not lose sight of our unique identity.

Since we last met in Bangalore, a proper mechanism for providing a live link between party and Government has been set up. I am happy to report that this has ensured better coordination between party and Government.

Funding of Political Activity

We had launched the path-breaking *Aajivan Sahyog Nidhi* to collect funds for party work. The response to the scheme has been satisfying. But we could do a lot more to make this scheme a thumping success and thus show the whole world that funding of political activity is possible without touching big money.

Prepare for Assembly Polls

In another few months, the people of many States, including Goa, will be called upon to elect a new Government. We have to start preparing for the electoral battle ahead of us and leave no stone unturned to ensure victory for the party. It is a challenge for us, but it also affords us an opportunity to secure the trust of the people so that we can serve them.

Avoid Lapses of the Previous Round

During the last round of Assembly elections, we paid a price for certain organisational weaknesses, coupled with extraneous factors. We have to collectively exert ourselves to ensure that we avoid those weaknesses this time and harness the immeasurable strength of our organisation for the party's victory. There is no denying the fact that how we perform will reflect on the BJP-led Government at the Centre.

Acquaint People with Achievements of the Government

Therefore, let us go to the people with pride – we should be proud of the many splendid achievements of our Government and our ideological commitment. Let us prepare for the electoral battle ahead. And let us all resolve to let nothing stand between us and victory in the coming State Assembly elections.

A New Century, A Great Future

I have earlier mentioned that we have just entered the 52nd century of the Kaliyug. In another nine months we will enter AD 2000. Recently, I read a letter written by Sri Aurobindo that contains a fitting message for us as we stand at the threshold of a new era:

"The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future..."

I have no doubt that a greater future awaits India and all Indians.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

1-2 May, 1999

I welcome you all to this session of the party's National Executive.

We are meeting exactly a month after our session in Goa. In this past month, significant events have occurred, necessitating this meeting.

AIADMK Violates Coalition *Dharma*

Even while we were meeting in Goa, we had an inkling about the AIADMK's plans to pull out of the BJP-led Government. We tried our best to impress upon the AIADMK not to break ranks and act in a manner that would go against the mandate of 1998. The AIADMK, however, was not amenable to reason or logic. It chose to violate the *dharma* of coalition politics. Worse, it persisted with its wholly unreasonable and unacceptable demands. The Government rightly stood firm and refused to concede even an inch.

Destructive Opposition

The subsequent events are known to all. It would, however, be instructive to recall some points that illustrate the negativism, the destructivism of the Opposition. The cavalier manner in which the Opposition scoffed at all urgings to take the nation into confidence about the alternative they had to offer, betrayed their real intention: To somehow pull down the Government knowing full well they had no alternative to offer. They claimed that they would form a Government in five minutes. They could not cobble together an alternative worth its name in more than a week.

Destabilisers Fail to form a Government

Ironically, while the destabilisers were united on their destructive agenda, on their intent to pull down the Government through undemocratic manoeuvres, they were irrevocably divided when it was their chance to build. The Congress claimed it would secure majority support in 48 hours. The claim fell flat when the Congress found that not only was it impossible to breach the ranks of the BJP and its allies, but those in the Opposition on whose support it had banked were not willing to back a Congress Government. In the end, the entire exercise of destabilising the Government and hijacking the mandate backfired on the chief destabiliser – the Congress – and exposed the chief instigator – the Left. Equally exposed are the Samajwadi Party, the RJD and all those who have violated the spirit of the mandate of 1998 and forced a costly mid-term election on the nation.

Congress the main Culprit

The responsibility for the dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha and imposing a costly mid-term election on the nation lies squarely on the Congress and all those who joined hands with the Congress to pull down the BJP-led Government without any alternative in place.

Against the backdrop of these developments of the past month, two points merit reiteration. First, the Congress has once again proved that it is a party that cannot survive without power. Whenever it has been thrown out of office by the people, it has hit back in the only way it knows – destabilising the Government of the day, trying to manipulate itself into power and, failing which, forcing a mid-term election.

Attempt to Grab Power without Mandate

The debate on the confidence motion showed that the Congress and other parties in the Opposition had no issue. All they had was their over-whelming desire to somehow manoeuvre themselves into office. Nothing mattered to them in their shameless pursuit for power without mandate. The adverse impact on the economy, the fact that crucial policy initiatives would be stalled, the damage to India's image as a mature democracy – none of these factors impinged on the Congress or the other destabilisers. Their sole motive was to destroy, not to build.

Second, the Left, which has constantly sought to appropriate the moral highground on the strength of its spurious ideology, stands exposed as a gang of petty, scheming, intriguing, manipulating individuals. Notwithstanding the Left's loud denunciation of corrupt politicians, criminals in politics and casteist politics, the leftists unhesitatingly ganged up with these very forces to sabotage the mandate of 1998.

People of India Betrayed

The entire effort of the Congress, the Left and others, however, fetched them no gains. In the end they fell out, bitterly squabbling among themselves, each accusing the other of betrayal. The truth is that they have collectively betrayed the people of India, a betrayal for which they will have to pay a heavy price whenever elections are held – in June or in September. The people will not forgive them for letting down the nation.

NDA Contesting from a Position of Strength

So, we have a scenario where our opponents are in disarray with nothing in common among them. On the other hand, we and our allies have stood together and shall face the coming elections together. We share a common commitment to making India strong and prosperous and a common programme to achieve this goal – the National Agenda for Governance. The BJP and its allies are agreed on this agenda and, along with new allies and friends, we will update it to meet new challenges and seize new opportunities. That shall be our common, shared platform during the election campaign.

Friends, we are contesting this election from a position of enviable strength.

- **The Government has performed extremely well** and acted in the best interests of the nation in its short span of 14 months.
- We have new friends and allies which is a tribute to our party's **increasing acceptability**.
- There is no leader who can come anywhere remotely near the **stature and ability of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.

We should Now Work for a Decisive Mandate

Despite the fractured nature of the 12th Lok Sabha, the Government was able to achieve a lot. With a decisive mandate for the BJP and its allies, you can imagine how much more can be achieved. Let us return to our respective States after this meeting, firm in our resolve to secure such a mandate and bring the Vajpayee Government back to power with a thumping majority.

It is our unity – in the party and with our allies – that provided us with strength to face the Opposition’s destructive politics. This unity will give us the strength to win, and win convincingly, the coming election. So, let us strengthen the bonds of this unity. It has been and shall remain the key to our success.

We are all aware that there are many who are greatly disturbed about the role played by the destabilising forces at home and abroad this past month. It is in the interest of the nation, of our democracy, that these destabilising forces should be resoundingly defeated. Therefore, I urge all those who love India to join hands with us in defeating these forces. The coming election will be a battle against destabilisers and we have to win this battle.

So, let us put our best foot forward and strive to secure a clear and decisive victory. We have already started preparing for the mid-term election. Shri LK Advani will head the Committee for National Campaign and Election Management and I have no doubt that today’s situation, which pollsters are describing as “Advantage, BJP”, can be converted into “Win all, BJP”.

Convert Present Challenge Into An Opportunity

I call upon all party workers and well-wishers to work shoulder to shoulder and convert the present challenge into an opportunity. Above all, I appeal to the people of India who cherish democracy and are proud of being Indians, to stand with us and our allies. Together, we can ensure that India will stride into the next century led by a Government headed by Shri Vajpayee.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

3-4 November, 1999

I welcome you all to this session of the Bharatiya Janata Party's National Executive.

We are meeting at a glorious moment that will forever be remembered in the history of independent India and the history of our great party.

A Dream comes True

I am reminded of the concluding words of Shri LK Advani's address to the National Council meeting in Mumbai in December 1995: "India is destined to make her entry into the 21st century under the leadership of powerful nationalist forces that are surfacing at every level in this great nation of a billion people."

His words have proved to be prophetic.

The dream of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, to build a party that would pursue the ideal of a proud and prosperous nation and undertake the noble task of leading India towards her glorious destiny, has come true. The tireless work and unsung sacrifices of thousands of party workers have borne fruit.

A Positive Mandate

For the third consecutive time, the BJP has secured the people's mandate to govern India.

- In 1996, the mandate, though fractured, was clearly in favour of a BJP-led Government. That mandate was hijacked by the Congress-backed United Front. We had

to bow out of office after 13 days.

- In 1998, the BJP and its allies secured a clearer verdict, though just short of a majority of their own. Unfortunately, one of our allies was lured away by the Congress and our Government fell after 13 months.
- In 1999, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance has won a mandate with a thumping majority. Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee remains at the helm of the nation. To him goes the credit of becoming the only Prime Minister other than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to secure a third consecutive mandate.

We contested this election on the strength of our three 'P's: Our Prime Ministerial candidate; our Performance in Government; and, our Programme for the nation. We had sought a positive vote for the BJP and its allies in the NDA. We were successful on both fronts.

The Mandate of '99 is a *positive mandate* for all our three 'P's. For the first time since 1984, the people of India have voted for the incumbent Prime Minister and his Government.

Rejection of Politics of Negativism

The Mandate of '99 is also a rejection of the politics of negativism and destabilization in which our opponents had indulged in the hope of short-circuiting the democratic path to power. Thus, this year's verdict is a reward for our performance and a punishment for those who strove hard to undo that performance.

On behalf of the party, I thank the people for their mandate.

I also congratulate the people on reaffirming their faith in democracy. Their vote is as much a mandate for democracy as a mandate for us to govern. By demonstrating their commitment to democracy, at a time when democracy is being throttled in some countries, the people of India stand taller in the eyes of the world today.

BJP Increases Strength, Congress Irrelevant

Friends, between 1996 and 1999, we have grown from strength to strength. From Andaman to Kashmir; from Gujarat to Assam,

our candidates have been elected. Conversely, the parliamentary strength of the Congress has declined. In this election, the Congress has touched an all-time low of 112 seats. There is no reason to believe that the Congress will be able to check this slide.

Palanquin-Bearers Reduced to a Footnote

The Congress, therefore, has lost relevance, as also has the Left. The 'historical blunder' of the Left did not lie in not making Jyoti Basu the Prime Minister in 1996. The Left parties' historical blunder was to become the palanquin-bearers of the Congress. In the event, the Left has been reduced to a mere footnote in history.

What has emerged with this election is a bipolar polity. The dominant pole is the BJP; the other pole is the Congress.

Strengthening of Coalition Politics

This election has also seen the laying to rest of the politics of untouchability that had been used by our opponents to their advantage all these decades. The forging of the National Democratic Alliance and its victory in the polls is a testimony to our pursuing the path of righteousness in the face of hostile propaganda. It is a tribute to our lakhs of workers and sympathisers who stood steadfast and firm in their belief that we shall triumph one day.

Challenges Ahead

We have come a long way. From being reduced to the status of a two-seat party in 1980, we have emerged as the largest party in Parliament. This is no mean achievement. Indeed, this is a moment to celebrate, a moment to feel proud.

But it is also a moment for introspection.

Our victory has not come easy – behind it lie numerous sacrifices and sustained, selfless hard work by countless faceless people. Their dedication should be borne in mind – to draw inspiration from and to steer the right course.

Time to Consolidate our Gains

We should also bear in mind that the Mandate of '99 is a covenant of trust between the people and us. Nothing should be

done to damage this trust. On the contrary, we should build upon it and consolidate our gains.

The present situation calls for a great degree of ingenuity; it places on us the onerous responsibility of restraint – in both deeds and words. It gives us the opportunity to prove ourselves worthy of the trust of the people. Let us make optimum use of this opportunity.

Legacy of 45 Years of Congress Misrule

For this, we have to constantly bear in mind that we are a responsible ruling party, alive to the interests of all sections of our society, irrespective of their caste, religion, gender or language. In this task, both the party and the Government have to play a complementary role.

The Government's job is by no means an easy one.

- Decades of cynical abuse of power by the Congress has greatly weakened institutions that act as the pillars of our democracy.
- Faulty economic policies and populist economics have gravely undermined the national economy.
- Huge sums of money have been squandered in the name of social welfare with nearly a third of the population still living below the poverty line.
- For years, national security imperatives have been ignored and leniency shown to disruptive and separatist elements.
- Those guilty of crimes have been allowed to escape and cases allowed to fester in courts of law.

These are only some examples of the legacy of 45 years of Congress misrule.

Some Hard Decisions will be Required

Under the able leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, significant achievements were made possible by the previous Government to correct these wrongs. A lot more remains to be done. Under Shri Vajpayee's continued leadership, Government has begun work in right earnest; let us back it up with full organisational support.

Friends, no doubt, popular expectations are extremely high from this Government. But given the objective situation that prevails, Government may have to take some tough decisions. People are alert enough to understand the imperative behind these short-term decisions that are bound to have a beneficial impact in the long-term.

Carry the Message to the People

But that does not minimise our task. We must mobilise all our organizational skills and resources to explain to the people the need for such decisions if we are to be prepared as a nation to face the challenges of the new century that is knocking at our doors. We have to convince the people that mere sloganeering cannot deliver good governance. We have to fight the inevitable hostile campaign of our opponents.

And we can achieve this if we stand united and do not allow petty thoughts to come in the way. Our unity and our discipline are our party's assets. Let us make full use of them and build upon the goodwill and trust that have been vested in us.

Performance in some States below Expectation

The party and the Government can together, through their joint effort, provide good governance. If we fail in this endeavour, we will have only ourselves to blame. In this context, there are lessons to be learned from our experience in those States where our performance in this election has not been up to the expectations.

Widening the Appeal of the Party

There is another task ahead for the organisation. We have to further expand our base and reach out to more sections of the people. This has to be our relentless effort. It is a challenge for us, and we have to meet this challenge and emerge successful. We have to strengthen our organization in various geographical areas and thus draw towards us an ever-increasing number of people from all sections of our society. These should figure high on our agenda.

Raise Funds for Coastal Orissa

Last month, coastal Orissa was devastated by two severe cyclones in quick succession. The Central Government has already released Rs 550 crore for immediate rescue and relief operations.

But the rehabilitation of the cyclone-hit people will take a lot of effort and calls for national participation. I wish to make an appeal to all our workers and well-wishers through you. We propose to mobilise funds for this effort and I am confident that with the help of all our workers and well-wishers, we shall be able to raise a substantial sum.

Friends, we have a powerful weapon in our hands – the Government of India.

However, for us power has never been an end by itself, but the means to an end. *Let us always remember that for us power is a means to serve India's national interest and ensure the welfare of the people.* If we can do that, then nothing can stop us from finding for the BJP its rightful place in history as the force that fired a resurgent India.

Let us, therefore, return from this National Executive meeting reinvigorated.

Let us rededicate ourselves to the cherished ideals of our party and the noble task of nation-building.

Vande Mataram!



National Council

Chennai

27-29 December, 1999

I welcome you all to this meeting of the National Council of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

We are gathered in the beautiful city of Chennai at a glorious moment in the history of our party. Before I proceed, I would like to thank the people of Tamil Nadu, especially of Chennai, for their warm affection and hospitality.

The National Council of the party is meeting after nearly a year-and-a-half. We last met in Gandhinagar in May 1998, soon after a mid-term general election and the formation of a BJP-led coalition Government headed by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Coincidentally, this time, too, we are meeting after yet another mid-term general election and the formation of a new Government, once again headed by Shri Vajpayee.

There is an important difference, though. In 1998, we were heading a post-election coalition without a majority of its own. This time, the National Democratic Alliance came into being before the elections and has a comfortable majority of its own.

I shall come to the significance of this difference in a few moments.

Between 1998 and 1999

Friends, all that transpired between the formation of the Government in 1998 and its fall in 1999 is too well known to be repeated here.

The unacceptable demands that were constantly being made

by one of our partners, the AIADMK, the final parting of ways, the coming together of that party and the Congress and our resultant defeat on the floor of the House are now part of history.

We learned from our experience. This time, we forged a pre-election alliance and adopted a common Manifesto. Since all members of the NDA are committed to this Manifesto, there is no scope for any differences on its implementation.

That is the first difference between 1998 and 1999.

Pre-Election Alliance and a common Manifesto

The second difference is that unlike in 1998, this time we have a comfortable majority. The people have voted decisively and given a clear mandate to the NDA to rule for a full five-year term.

NDA has a Clear Mandate

This mandate has been given for three reasons.

First, the people were clearly upset with our opponents' politics of destabilisation – the voters decided to punish the destabilisers for their political greed.

Second, the people were convinced that the BJP and its allies could be trusted to deliver on their promises; the voters decided to reward our 13 months' performance in office.

Third, the people voted for the tallest leader in India today: Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Above all, the Mandate of '99 is a positive mandate. This is further underscored by the fact that the people have elected an incumbent Government for the first time in the last decade.

On behalf of the entire party, I thank the people.

Commendable Effort by Party Workers

I also thank the countless party workers and well-wishers who have toiled tirelessly and without any expectation to fulfil the dream of seeing our party come to power at the Centre and Shri Vajpayee as the Prime Minister.

'Feel Good Factor'

If I were to sum up in a few words the achievement of the BJP-led Government of 1998-99 and the NDA Government that is now in office, I would describe it as ushering in the 'feel good factor' in our national life.

For decades, India was in turmoil, caught in social discord, communal disharmony and economic deceleration. People suffered from a sense of insecurity. India's crisis of leadership left the people despondent. There was all round cynicism.

In less than two years, the situation has changed dramatically.

Upbeat Popular Mood

Social tensions have eased, communal amity has been restored, the national economy is on the upswing, inflation has been reined in and prosperity is no longer out of reach for those who till now only dreamt of it. The people once again feel secure that the country's affairs are in safe hands and they can go about their daily lives without any distraction. The popular mood is upbeat as never before.

Full Faith in the Government

This was best exemplified during this summer's Kargil conflict. Such was the confidence in the Government's ability to overcome the crisis and defeat the enemy that nobody could make out that a full scale war was being fought in Kashmir.

Indeed, our stock markets kept on booming, keeping pace with our artillery guns!

The people's confidence was not misplaced.

Crushing Defeat for Pakistan

Pakistan suffered a crushing defeat on the battlefield. Diplomatically, it was isolated. Never in the past has international opinion been so overwhelmingly in favour of India, least of all in times of war.

Even the management of the post-Kargil situation has been spectacular. The economy was not allowed to suffer nor was the burden of the military campaign passed on to the people.

The 'feel good factor' has received a further boost with the

election results and the Government's various new initiatives for social and economic development.

Rapid Delivery for Swift Development

If the overall results of the 13th Lok Sabha elections indicate popular approval of the Central Government's performance, the verdict in some States reflects a strong anti-incumbency factor induced by the uneven performance of the respective State Governments.

After suffering five decades of governmental lethargy during Congress Raj, the people expect things to be different. More than anything else, they want a better quality of life. And they want it now.

The people's aspirations are fully justified. After all, it is the State's responsibility to fulfil the basic needs of its citizens. An effective State is one that can reach out to the largest possible number of people and provide them with education, healthcare, housing and security.

The Government has rightly listed these crucial areas of social development as items of priority concern. I call upon Government to act on them with utmost urgency.

Growth with Equity

Rapid economic change with swift social development should be our twin guiding principles wherever we are in power. Unless we can ensure growth with equity, we cannot look forward to continued popular support. Let there be no doubt about this expectation of the people from us.

There are two long-pending issues that need to be addressed if the national development programme has to become meaningful and truly effective.

Need for Parity in Development Levels

The first pertains to regional disparities and uneven development among the States. There are also disparities in the development levels between urban and rural areas. Ways and means have to be devised to bring about parity in development levels so that no region or State feels left behind or deprived.

This will go a long way in removing grievances of the people of less developed regions, for instance the North-East, and contribute towards national integration.

Stabilize Population

The second burning issue of the day is the need to stabilise India's population. The needs of an ever-expanding population base cannot be met with inelastic national resources. India needs a National Population Policy without any further delay.

Pokhran and after

The Russian Revolution is described as 'ten days that shook the world'. The five nuclear tests in Pokhran, conducted by the Government in May 1998, can well be described as 'Five explosions that shook the world'!

Suddenly, the big powers woke up to the fact that India is not just another developing country that can be ignored. They acted swiftly by imposing sanctions and withholding aid. But once again, the Government demonstrated its ability to face up to the big powers.

India Stands Tall in the Comity of Nations

A little over a year after Pokhran II, we find a sea change in the attitude of the developed countries. India's security concerns are now better appreciated. We stand tall in the comity of nations with a new-found sense of self-confidence and pride.

In a fast emerging global scenario where all countries are interdependent, the notion of a unipolar world is both repugnant and unacceptable. No nation, no matter how powerful economically or militarily, can dictate terms to others.

India has rightly and robustly articulated this position at the recent WTO meeting in Seattle. That the meeting proved to be a non-starter is evidence of the untenability of a presumed unipolar world.

External and Internal Security Concerns

I have already mentioned the Kargil conflict and Pakistan's misadventure. Although the Pakistani Army was defeated and had to pull back from the Indian side of the LoC, Pakistan has not given up its anti-India designs.

Military Coup in Pakistan adds to Our Concerns

Pakistan continues to indulge in cross border terrorism and hostile anti-India propaganda. What has added a new dimension to the hostility is the military coup in Pakistan.

The developments in Pakistan are not without significance for our national security concerns. Soon after seizing power, the military rulers of Pakistan allowed terrorist organisations to hold a conference that resulted in cries of jihad against India. Many of these organisations, especially the Lashkar-e-Toiba, are known to be involved in terrorist activity in India.

Zero Tolerance towards Terrorism

Government must take all possible measures to combat cross-border terrorism. The Prime Minister has already promised the nation that Government will adopt a policy of 'zero tolerance' towards terrorism. We now need to demonstrate our firmness towards this crime against humanity.

There are other aspects that require Government's attention, too. For instance, the bloody campaign of terror unleashed by Left extremists in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar need to be met with a tough, concerted counter-campaign.

Similarly, insurgency needs to be tackled with a firm hand in the North-Eastern States, especially in Tripura and Manipur where the situation is fast becoming alarming. The shadow of terror cannot be allowed to be cast upon any Indian citizen.

Political Situation

As you are aware, the last general election has seen the emergence of the BJP as the major party, while at the rate at which the Congress has been rapidly losing ground, it could well end up becoming a marginal player in national politics. There is little to suggest that the Congress is willing to learn from its past mistakes and preparing to recover lost ground.

On the contrary, the collapse of the Congress Government in Goa shows how fragile the party's present state of existence is and how brittle the leadership's command over the party is. The pathetic performance of the Congress Government in Orissa and its utter inability to meet the crisis forced upon the people of the

State by the super cyclone are unpardonable. I have no doubt that the people of Orissa will punish the Congress when Assembly elections are held.

Congress Losing ground

The Congress had promised to play the role of responsible opposition. But it created a storm over its demand to drop Rajiv Gandhi's name from the CBI's chargesheet in the Bofors case. The Government's stand on this issue has now been vindicated. The Congress had attributed political motive; now, it has been shown it is the Congress which had a political agenda.

Meanwhile, the tenuous coalition that the Congress had cobbled together prior to the general election has all but disappeared.

CPI(M) about to Lose National Status

The Left parties are fast losing contact with the realities of the day and their base is shrinking even in those States where they were once powerful. After its poor performance in the last round of elections, the CPI(M) could well lose its status as a national party.

It is amusing to note the CPI(M)'s demand that rules governing the status of political parties should be amended in order to enable the Marxists to continue to keep up the façade of theirs being a 'national party'!

The RJD in Bihar is on its last legs. The indulgences of the 'ruling family' of Bihar are reminiscent of Nero fiddling while Rome burnt. As in Orissa, in Bihar, too, the incumbent regime cannot escape the wrath of the people.

In both these States we have to be prepared for the elections and put our best foot forward so that the people have a clear choice between those who have failed them and those who can deliver them from their present plight.

Attempts by Opposition to disturb Communal Amity

A last point. Our opponents never tire of raising the same old bogey of 'communalism' although there are few willing to believe their canard. The despicable manner in which they

stalled Parliament over Ayodhya and their attempt to inflame communal sentiments can only be condemned in the strongest terms.

The argument they put up lacks reason and logic. For instance, they claim that a particular community cannot build its place of worship in a place because it has a dominant population belonging to another community!

Such perverse logic can only have one purpose: Disturbing communal amity and creating disharmony. We have to guard against such designs.

Organisational Affairs

Friends, next year we are scheduled to have our party organisational elections. Starting January, our membership drive will begin.

I would urge you to use this occasion to expand the social base of the party, reaching out to as many sections of our society as possible and bringing into the party fold men and women of integrity who are eager to offer their selfless service to strengthen our organisation.

India is a multi-religious, multi-lingual country. In keeping with our ideology, we must at all times uphold the principle of inclusiveness and shun exclusivity of all variety.

BJP Committed to the well being of all Indians

On this occasion, as President of the party, I wish to reiterate our collective belief. The BJP, whether in power or not, is committed to the wellbeing of all Indians, irrespective of their gender, caste, religion or language. Together, we can work shoulder-to-shoulder to make our motherland strong, prosperous and proud.

Friends, I wish to say a few words on the issue of party discipline. We must remember that individuals who placed the organisation above everything else built this party. We are what we are today because the organisation's interests were always placed above individual interests and aspirations.

Lack of Discipline and Loyalty not Acceptable

In recent times, however, we have seen the unfortunate tendency among some individuals to place themselves above the party. This is unacceptable.

The BJP was known as a party with a difference, a party that placed a premium on discipline and absolute loyalty to the party's principles and programmes. That image has been tarnished by the action of individuals who have chosen to promote their own interests at the expense of those of the party.

Yes, there can be differences and there can be problems. But these must be resolved within the party and at the appropriate forum. To break ranks and violate discipline amounts to disowning the party. For such individuals, there never has been and there never shall be any place in the organisation.

Disciplinary action and Training Camps

We need to take steps to avoid unpleasant and regrettable experiences and to refurbish the image of the BJP as a party with a difference. I suggest the following:

- Involve a larger number of workers in both the decision-making process and in executing our programmes and policies.
- Ensure greater coordination among units and morchas at all levels; and, between the party and its legislative wings both at the Centre and in the States.
- Act swiftly to resolve differences and address grievances; disciplinary action should not be kept pending but taken immediately.
- Organise regular training camps for our workers, both new entrants and existing members, at all levels.
- Activate and functionalise party units at the grassroots level. It is not enough to set up mandal level units; we have to ensure that they are active and functional at all times.

Our Responsibilities

I call upon all party members and legislators through the National Council to contemplate on what is expected of them in the changed circumstances. We are no longer a party in Opposition, but a party in Government.

Enormous responsibility devolves upon us on two counts.

BJP has a big Responsibility to Discharge

The BJP is the biggest party in the country today with the largest number of elected representatives in Parliament. And, we are the biggest partner in the National Democratic Alliance that is governing the country.

NDA Agenda is Our Agenda

Nothing should be said or done that conveys even the slightest hint of irresponsibility on our part. We are committed to the Agenda of the NDA. Therefore, the NDA's agenda is our agenda: Nothing more, nothing less.

Our primary responsibility is to ensure good governance and radical socio-economic transformation. Our opponents will try to distract our attention from this responsibility and if we allow ourselves to be distracted, we will be falling in their trap.

Let us not forget that the people have entrusted us with this responsibility and if we fail in our duty, we will be betraying the trust of the people.

Here, I would like to stress the fact that greater responsibility lies with my senior colleagues. They have to show the path to the workers through their deeds and words. Nothing that they say or do should fetch criticism and give a handle to our opponents.

Our Goals

Let us return from this meeting imbued with the spirit of dedicated service to the people through ethical politics.

For us, politics has always been a noble mission, the humble means to a greater end: A prosperous society free of all discrimination; a society where every citizen contributes to the task of nation-building; and, a society that does not suffer from the twin evils of casteism and religious fanaticism.

Ours is a truly nationalist party because we put the nation before everything else. We can live up to the dreams of our founders, namely Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, if we do not deviate from the path shown by them.

Vande Mataram!



National Council

Gandhinagar

3-4 May, 1998

Mr. Chairman, Reception Committee, Brother & Sister Delegates,

I welcome you all to this historic session of the Bharatiya Janata Party's National Council. It is with a deep sense of humility and gratitude, and unbounded confidence in the great future of our party and our nation, that I rise to address you.

This session is historic in more than one sense of the term.

It is the first session of the National Council of the party when the BJP is the leader of the governing set-up at the Centre and the founder-President of our party and our seniormost leader, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, is the Prime Minister of this great nation. This is the moment that we all had dreamed of. This is the moment which millions upon millions of patriotic people had been eagerly waiting and praying for all these decades.

Therefore, this is a thanks-giving session for the people's as well as our beloved leader, Shri Vajpayee. He today personifies, like no other living leader, the country's collective will and vision.

Massive Support from the People

It is the first session of the National Council after our party notched its best ever performance in any Parliamentary election. We used to say in 1989 that "if the elections in 1984 represented the lowest point in our electoral graph, the elections in 1989 represent the highest." In the next elections, we said the same thing, only replacing 1989 with 1991. In the elections held five years later, we once again said the same thing with even greater pride, only

replacing 1991 with 1996.

But the people of India kept indicating to us in direct and subtle ways, "*Why are you feeling so proud yet when we are determined to better even your best-ever performance?*" And they actually showed it by giving the BJP a much greater seat-share and vote-share in 1998 than in 1996. The people's support was always there to be mobilised and harnessed. But the mobilising and harnessing could not have happened without the ceaseless struggle and willing sacrifices of tens of thousands of our party workers, supporters and sympathisers.

However, even the *karyakartas'* struggle and sacrifices could not have borne fruit, and our journey from 2 seats in 1984 to 182 in 1998 could not have become possible, without the firm and far-sighted leadership of Shri LK Advani. Therefore, this is a thanksgiving session for our *karyakartas* – for all of you – and for our respected leader, Shri Advani.

Friends, I am myself a *karyakarta*. All my life has gone into building and expanding the party organisation. Our top leaders are now engaged in running the Government. The entire nation wishes that this Government runs well. All of us in the party also wish that it runs well. Naturally, to achieve this purpose, our stalwarts had to take up important responsibilities in the Government.

The Importance of keeping the Party in Good Shape

But, then, the party organisation, too, should run well simultaneously. After all, this is the vehicle that has brought us to the present station along our journey. Only if this vehicle is kept well-fuelled, well-oiled and always in the best possible state of maintenance, can we hope to move faster and with confidence along the difficult path ahead.

Therefore, it is necessary that we remind ourselves that the party organisation is equally important at a time when our party is in power at the Centre. That is why, I think, a *karyakarta* like me has been entrusted with the responsibility of heading the party at this juncture.

We must not become Complacent

I sincerely thank the entire party for electing me unanimously. Friends, I know my capabilities and also my limitations. Our party has always taken pride in collective decision-making. Therefore, I do not foresee any difficulty in conducting the affairs of the party as per today's needs.

At the same time, I would like to caution everybody in the party that, in this hour of glory, we should not harbour any illusion that our goal has been achieved. People have very high expectations from us. Their problems and the nation's problems are acute. People want to see us tackle these problems with courage, determination and understanding – and, more important than anything else – begin producing tangible and visible solutions to these problems at the earliest. This requires that each and every BJP *karyakarta*, whose very nature is to toil ceaselessly and devotedly, must resolve not to become complacent and never to lose sight of our goal.

I assume this office by saluting the sacred memory of our founder, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, and the source of our inspiration and ideological guidance, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. I have had the rare privilege of having known and worked with both of them. It is their ideals, which they personified in their own personal lives, that have guided me throughout my 47 years of association with this organisation – first with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and then with the Bharatiya Janata Party. The same ideals shall be my beacon as I discharge my duties as the President of this party of Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Deendayal Upadhyay.

The True Purpose of Power

Friends, as I said, this meeting coincides with the BJP's coming to power. For us power has never meant an end by itself; we have always viewed power as the means to an end. And that end is the welfare of the people. Our Government is committed to this goal. Power, if exercised justly for the welfare of the people, can be an ennobling experience. Power used for furthering individual interests is a corrupting influence. We should beware of that.

We must remember that our journey, which in a sense began in 1951 with the formation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, is by no means over now that we are in power. We have no doubt come

far, but we have to go farther. And we can do that only if the party organisation becomes stronger and our workers remain steadfast to their commitment.

Politics is a Noble Mission

We are meeting in Gandhinagar and the venue is not without significance. The contribution of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel, both great sons of Gujarat, to the freedom movement and in shaping Indian politics will forever be remembered for two things. First, they raised the level of politics by infusing it with morality and ethics; and, second, they proved through their actions that politics is a noble mission.

Strengthening Ethical Base of Politics

For us in the BJP, politics bereft of an ethical and moral base can at best serve the interest of individuals, definitely not of the nation. Hence our emphasis on strengthening the ethical base of politics, because for us it is a noble mission. Let us rededicate ourselves to this noble mission and strengthen our resolve to fight the degeneration of politics at the hands of politicians who put themselves above the nation.

Our fight against the degeneration of politics and perversion of democratic norms began in Gujarat. I recall that a decade or so ago, we had won 26 seats in the Rajkot municipality and the Congress had 25 members. The Congress managed to get one of our members to defect, thus robbing us of our majority. The party responded by launching a campaign that unleashed a groundswell of public opinion against the Congress and that defector, forcing him to resign from his seat. When election to this seat was held later, we won, regaining our majority.

Nearly a decade later, we witnessed the same unethical politics of subverting the people's mandate, this time on a larger scale, when the Keshubhai Patel Government was destabilised by some of our own people who were unable to overcome the temptation of seizing office through foul means. But, in the end they had to pay for their sins.

Our Objective is To Serve the People

The people punished them for their immorality. We are once again back in power in Gujarat. The people have stood by us because we did not forsake our principles. But we have to be more vigilant and prove that what happened in the past was an aberration. The BJP has been known as a "party with a difference"; we cannot lose sight of this distinction that sets us apart from those who indulge in unethical pursuit of power to promote their own interests. We should not lose sight of the fact that our organisation is here to serve the people of this great nation.

We must bear this in mind, more so now that the organisation has grown. Last year alone we increased our membership by nearly 100 per cent, from 70 lakh to a crore-and-a-half. But mere expansion is not enough. We have to also carry everybody with us. Each one of us has to be involved in the selfless task of building a caring, just and kinder society, starting from the bottom. If we are able to lay a strong foundation, a foundation based on idealism and ideology, the structure we build on that foundation will be naturally strong and last longer.

Role of the Party

A question that I have often been asked ever since the new Government was formed is: What shall be the role of the party in the changed circumstances? Till now, as an Opposition political party, we were primarily involved in mobilising opinion against the establishment by focusing on the failures of the Government. But now that the BJP is part of the establishment, we have to reconsider the role of the party.

Our main effort should be two-pronged: first, provide the Government with direction and perspective; and, second, serve as a bridge connecting the Government with the masses. For both these tasks, we must have a constant feel of the pulse of the people.

We have to expand our organisation both vertically and horizontally, because only then can we reach out to the largest number of people. This, in turn, will enable us to feel the pulse of the people and thus help us provide the Government with the right direction in policy formulation.

Simultaneously, the party must become a vehicle that can carry to the Government reliable feedback. The Government can evolve an excellent policy. But the implementation of that policy needs to be monitored and this task cannot be left to the bureaucracy alone. If Ministers use the party organisation as an alternative source of information or feedback, then not only will they get a perspective different from that provided by the bureaucracy, the bureaucrats will also become more alert.

We must constantly bear in mind that Government is an instrument to serve the people, not a goal by itself. Now that we are in power, we should not think that our work is over. That would destroy the organisation. We have before us the example of the Congress organisation fading away because of such an attitude.

More importantly, in the new circumstances, members of the party organisation must be dedicated and scrupulously honest; their integrity must be above reproach. Lastly, the organisation should not become a part of the establishment.

Our Ideology is our Strength

A political party owes its birth to a political idea. The BJP, which is the inheritor of the legacy of the BJS, owes its birth to the idea of nationalism. This is the core of our ideology; for us India is one nation, one people and one culture. Our view that India is not a nation born in 1947 but an ancient nation defined by its unique and unifying cultural identity, is different from that of the Marxists who see India as several sub-nations. It is also different from the Congress view that India is a territorial nation born in 1947.

Ours is a civilisation that is more than 5,000 years old. Over all these centuries the people of this land, irrespective of their region or religion, caste or language, have shared common values, beliefs and customs. Notwithstanding all its diversities, over the millennia this nation of ours has evolved a common way of life that is rooted in a shared cultural heritage. It is this common way of life which is unique to India that we call *Hindutva* or cultural nationalism. You could call it by any other name – Indianness or *Bharatiyata*, but the core remains the same.

Commitment to the Concept of Nationalism

The BJP's critics have described cultural nationalism as being exclusive and communal. But that argument is without any basis. *Hindutva* is by definition an all-inclusive concept and is in perfect harmony with the true meaning of secularism – *sarva panth samabhav*. It means justice for all citizens. And it is this inherent strength of *Hindutva* that has helped check the vote-bank politics of the pseudo-secularists.

It is our commitment to uncompromising nationalism that has sustained us all these years and helped us overcome many an obstacle. I would also like to remind our workers of our four other commitments – national integration, democracy, positive secularism and value-based politics – and our basic philosophy, Integral Humanism. Our ideology has been our cutting edge. We cannot lose sight of it nor can we afford to stray away from it.

Ideology, however, is different from dogma. Ideology provides direction for growth; dogma holds you back. Ideology has to be seen as a matrix in which we have to constantly fit in the issues of the day without compromising on our basic principles.

***Samanvay*: The Overarching Principle of Progress**

Friends, this is a moment of historic transition in the life of our nation and in the life of our Party. The fact, that in less than seven months we will be entering the last year of this century and of this millennium, only highlights the transitional character of our present times. It is only appropriate, therefore, that our minds should be focused on the all-important question: *Where are we as a nation headed? Where are we as the Bharatiya Janata Party headed? Where do we want to go? And how can we go there?*

It is my firm belief – and it is a belief born out of my long experience and contemplation – that the principle which has helped India and our Party grow, and which will help them grow in the future too, is one and the same: the principle of *Samanvay*. It is difficult to find an appropriate single word for it in English. The closest translation would be *harmonisation and integration*.

It should be our collective endeavour to understand this principle in the context of the ideological, political and organisational tasks before the BJP as it readies to enter into a new

orbit of expansion and growth. *Samanvay* is indeed the overarching philosophical perspective that helps us find the right answers to all the questions in life and politics.

This perspective has been bequeathed to us by our culture itself. It has been nourished and constantly revitalised in each new era by the great texts of our civilisation such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Gita; the scriptures of Buddha, Mahaveer and Guru Nanak; the fine works of our Bhakti and Sufi saints; all the great kings of our land; all the works of our great social reformers like Sant Ravidas, Basaveshwar, Narayan Guru and countless others; and, of course, the life and teachings of the leaders in the modern era like Swami Vivekananda, Maharshi Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi.

This perspective also found its most distilled and crystal-clear expression in Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay's treatise *Integral Humanism*. For example, Pandit Deendayalji writes:

"Unity in diversity and the expression of unity in various forms has remained the central thought of Bharatiya culture. If this truth is whole-heartedly accepted then there will not exist any cause for conflict among various powers. Conflict is not a sign of culture or nature; rather, it is a symptom of their degradation."

We must apply this kernel of the BJP's ideology to the concrete challenges facing the country and our organisation today. In doing so, we must disabuse ourselves of any wrong notion that *Samanvay* is only a prescription for accommodation and, hence, it is the path of the weak. No. It is the path of the strong. It is indeed a key leadership principle.

Unity in Diversity, Diversity in Unity

We see how the BJP has been called upon to play this crucial leadership role in the present political situation in the country. Just as a farmer, who aims at a certain crop yield, first studies the nature of the soil and the environment, the imperative before our Party is to fully understand the nature of the society we are working in. Here it is my firm belief, and also my long-time complaint, that our political commentators have, with some exceptions, grossly over-simplified the nature of India's social soil.

Our society is very varied. Indeed, there is hardly any other country in the world which has a richer socio-cultural-linguistic diversity than India. Here the language, clothes, social customs, spiritual traditions, geographical and ecological conditions, economic realities change not only from state to state, but also from district to district. Often, you see changes if you travel from one place to another within a district.

Most of our political commentators tend to look at India's social issues either through the Hindu-Muslim prism or a rigid class and caste framework, glossing over not only other diversities but also the complex overlapping and intersecting of these diversities. Had the reality been as simple as is imagined to be in political and media circles, our problems could have been solved long ago.

This diversity is a source of strength. But the strength is realised only if the underlying unity is recognised, preserved and promoted. It is equally important that no section of the people should adopt a dog in the manger attitude.

This magical thread of unity running through all the rich diversity is what each of our nation builders – from the ancient *rishis* and social reformers to thinkers and national leaders in modern times – has preached to the people. Indeed, they extended the concept of oneness to cover not only the Indian nation, but to embrace the entire humanity, as is evident in the Vedic dictum "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*".

This sense of oneness of the human family, this readiness to accept and respect diversity, this practice of 'Live and Let Live' is a product not of law or the Constitution, but of our culture itself. It is precisely for this reason, for example, that you'll find ready support for issues like 'world peace' even in villages of India. Not hate but intense love is our way of life. Not dissection but synthesis is our culture.

Not only Conflict, but also Complementarity of Interests

The structure of our society is such that, whichever sector or issue you choose – be it agriculture, industry, rural-urban relationship, or any other – you see both conflict of interests as well as complementarity of interests. For example, given the

problems in Indian agriculture, there is a certain friction between agricultural workers and landowners. But if we see only the friction, we will be blind to the fact that they need each other.

Similarly, there is a glaring disparity between rural India and urban India. But if we look closely, we realise that the problems of neither rural India nor urban India can be solved in isolation, much less by pitting one against the other. Once again, the only way to deal with the issue is through the perspective of *Samanvay*.

Neither *Danda* nor Law alone, but only a sense of belonging will Ensure National Unity and Integration

No party can rule a country as large and diverse, and one facing as complex a set of problems, as India with a *danda*. Even the unity and integrity of the country cannot be maintained or strengthened with the use of the *danda*. Law and the Constitution alone cannot create a sense of oneness or the realisation of one's duties towards society and the nation. It can only be created if each and every citizen and the community feel in their minds and hearts that they belong to this nation. And the sense of belonging comes when each and every citizen, irrespective of his caste, religion or class, feels that he is being cared for.

It is this sense of the nation as one large, extended family which is the greatest guarantor of its unity and progress. That is when all the constituents of the nation experience the truth that India is not merely a geographical entity, but a living and ancient civilisational community which has been enriched by the contribution of one and all, and that each and everyone will progress if the nation progresses.

Party Workers must Ascertain the Problems People Face

I have tried to drive home my belief that India's problems can be tackled only if we understand India. But the question arises: How can we understand India if we don't go out into the villages, urban slums, tribal tracts and the places where the minorities live? If our Party workers do not spread out in all regions and among all sections of society, if we do not develop a sound knowledge of their specific histories and customs and problems and strengths,

how can we organise them? How can we make them come closer to our Party?

Hence, my appeal to all the Party workers is: *Develop a determination (sankalp) to identify yourselves with everything that is Indian, to feel the pain of each and every Indian, and to solve the problems of every section of society from a national perspective.* The social composition of our society should also get fully reflected in the structure of our Party organisation. The full and comprehensive *darshan* of *Bharat Mata* should happen when any observer looks at the BJP's organisational structure at all levels.

Mathematical or Vote-bank Approach to Politics won't do

In this context we should also know that the problems of no community can be solved if we adopt the approach of mathematics: that is, to calculate how much electoral or political value each community has on the basis of its numbers. Some of our communities are very small in number. Some of our states are very small in size and population. Their representation in Parliament is minimal, if at all. But can that be a reason to treat them as marginal? Arunachal Pradesh, for example, has a population of only 8 lakh and sends only two MPs to the Lok Sabha. And it has as many as 131 tribes, some of which have a population of less than 1,000. Can that be the justification for treating the state or its tiny tribal populations as inconsequential? The answer is 'Yes' if we follow the Congress approach thus far. But the answer will be an emphatic 'No' if we follow the approach of nationalism.

By adopting this sensitive and integrative approach, you'll be able to make the Scheduled Caste person feel that your Party is for him. You'll make the *vanavasi* feel that your Party is for him. You'll make the Mizo and the Naga and the Kuki in the North-East feel that your Party is for him. You'll make the Muslim and the Christian feel that your Party is for him. In the process, many problems and antagonistic issues linking one community with the other, one region with the other, will be encountered. But if we are committed to the principle of *Samanvay*, then we'll see not only problems but also solutions to those problems.

Minorities, BJP & Secularism

The BJP has been steadfast in its commitment to positive secularism that rejects the very concept of theocracy and lays emphasis on justice for all, appeasement of none. We hold the view that the state cannot be irreligious in the sense that it must have a *dharmic* base, neither should it be seen to be biased in favour of, or against, any religion. On the other hand, our opponents have perverted the meaning of secularism to either suit their perception of the state being irreligious or to camouflage their vote-bank politics.

To the first category of practitioners of pseudo-secularism, I would quote Mahatma Gandhi from *Hind Swaraj*: "Religion is dear to me, and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious". Gandhiji was referring to not any particular religion but that religion which underlies all religions – *dharma*. For the other practitioners of pseudo-secularism, I have only this to say – those whom you have misled all these years have begun to realise that their welfare lies not in false promises but in the just and fair actions of the Government. I urge the minority communities to judge us not by what our detractors say, but by our performance and our actions.

I also urge the pseudo-secularists to open their eyes to the plight of the minority community in Jammu and Kashmir and some north-eastern States. If they are genuinely concerned about minority rights, then they should not see the issue through the tinted glasses of vote-bank politics but apply the same yardstick to minority communities in every region of the country, irrespective of their religious identity. Untill they do this, their concern shall remain suspect.

Wherever we have been in power, we have ensured the security and dignity of the minority communities. Now that the BJP leads the Central Government, we will further prove our detractors wrong. In this general election, Muslims have voted for us in large numbers, defying the allurements and grim prognostics of our opponents. I have no doubt that more and more members of the minority communities will opt for us and free themselves from the practitioners of vote-bank politics.

Does the RSS Remote-control the BJP? No!

Another motivated canard used by our adversaries to somehow stop our onward march is the charge that the BJP is not its own master, but is actually "remote-controlled" by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. To allege that the RSS controls the BJP is not only a travesty of the objective truth, but also completely misrepresents the subjective reality as regards the nature and thinking of the Sangh leadership. As a matter of fact, all the leaders of the RSS up to now have discouraged controlling any organisation – much less a huge, all-embracing political organisation like the BJP – that is inspired by its nationalist ideology. This is because the very idea of centralised control is non-Hindu.

Over-centralisation as a philosophy and as a pattern of practice is indeed the hallmark of the Communists and the Congress. In the political history of modern India, two contrasting patterns of political mobilisation and organisation can be seen. One is the Communist pattern, in which there is a strong centre that treats all its units and affiliates as either subservient units or satellite bodies. The Congress, too, came to follow the same pattern, albeit with important points of difference, after its centralised control passed into the hands of the 'dynasty'.

The way the BJP has been organised, and the way it has functioned for the past 47 years since the days of the BJS, completely belies the description that it is remote-controlled by an outside centre. When our adversaries level this criticism against us, they are actually superimposing their pattern on us.

The RSS, thus, is not interested in remote-controlling the BJP. But the BJP looks up to the RSS for moral guidance. The RSS is the conscience-keeper of the *Sangh Parivar* and we are very much a part of that *parivar*. The Sangh's relationship with us is akin to the relationship that existed between *rishis* and kings – the former brought moral influence on the later, making it easier for him to steer the right course.

Import of the 1998 Election

The General Election of 1998 has turned out to be a watershed in India's electoral history. We contested the polls from the twin

platform of stable government and able leadership. The mandate of the people shows that they view the BJP as the only party that can restore social, economic and political stability as well as provide the country with able leadership.

The victory of the BJP and its alliance partners is only one of the outcomes of this mid-term election that was thrust upon the people after the artificial and purely opportunist compact between the UF and the Congress came apart. An equally important outcome that marks a historical turning point in the country's electoral history is the BJP's emergence as a truly national alternative to the Congress that has ruled for 45 of India's last 50 years and was till recently the only national alternative.

First Truly Non-Congress Government

In 1951 we dreamt of one day emerging as one of the principal poles of Indian politics. In 1998 we have made that dream come true. India's first truly non-Congress Government has assumed charge of the nation's affairs under the able leadership of Shri Vajpayee.

Our adversaries tried to isolate us once again by resorting to the same canards. But this time their attempts failed. Our pre-election allies stood by us and new allies came to our support after the polls. The BJP today has more friends than any other party. This reflects our increasing acceptability among the people and the political class. Ironically, those who tried to isolate us - and indeed were successful in isolating us in 1996 - stand isolated and forsaken today.

We have broken the crucial 25 per cent popular vote barrier and increased our strength in Parliament. The other alternative, the Congress, has suffered further erosion in its vote base and merely managed to maintain its parliamentary strength.

The Left being Pushed into Irrelevance

As far as the United Front - or whatever is left of it - is concerned, it is facing a deep identity crisis since it has been basically reduced to the Left Front. There is likely to be much turmoil in the Left parties themselves over the question of relationship with the Congress.

Special mention needs to be made here of the malignant contribution of the Left parties to the present degeneration of the political system. Even after history's resounding rejection of Communism and Marxism, they have not mended their thinking in India.

The Left has always lent an ideological veneer to the politics of anti-BJPism, providing the Congress and its clones with intellectual sustenance in their opposition to the politics of nationalism as represented by the BJP, and earlier the Jana Sangh.

Not that this has helped the Left. In fact it is the Left's fear of being pushed into irrelevance that has made it even more virulent and shrill in its opposition to the BJP in the guise of opposing 'communalism'.

Geographical and Social Expansion of the Party

A third indicator that emerges from the results is the geographical and social expansion of the BJP's support base. The party has done remarkably well in the south and the east and made inroads into the north-east. We have increased the number of our Scheduled Tribes MPs although the tally of our Scheduled Caste MPs has decreased primarily because of our not performing up to our expectations in Maharashtra and Rajasthan. My colleagues in these two States are looking into the reasons and I am confident that in the next elections we will perform better.

The party has done remarkably well in the State Assembly elections, too. I have already mentioned that we have been returned to power in Gujarat. We have also been able to form a Government in Himchal Pradesh and we are part of the Government in Meghalaya. Taken together, our success in these elections was no mean achievement.

We must, however, bear in mind that our success is also due to our alliance with some regional parties. We worked together and this fetched us good returns. I now look forward to the BJP and its alliance partners working together harmoniously in Government. There are bound to be hiccups now and then, but we have the strength to ride over them.

We have Higher Goals to Achieve

I would urge you to now concentrate on consolidating our electoral gains and expanding our support base. I have earlier said that we have come far, but I would once again reiterate that we have to go farther. We have to set our eyes on higher goals and achieve them in the coming days.

I would also urge to remain vigilant against the nefarious designs of the Congress and the Left to yet try and subvert the mandate of 1998. Since glaring internal contradictions in the Congress and the Left make it difficult for them to challenge our Government in a straight and democratic manner, they are bound to resort more and more to conspiratorial methods to achieve their objective. All in all, the role of the Left will be like that of Shakuni in the Mahabharata whose evil advice to the Kauravas led to their defeat and disgrace.

Alliance Politics as a Challenge and an Opportunity

We should view the ruling alliance we have created at the Centre as both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a challenge because it will test our Party's ability to maintain and strengthen the cohesiveness and unity of purpose of the alliance. Since we are the largest constituent in the alliance – indeed, its very heart and nucleus – we also carry a very high responsibility. And this responsibility is not only of Party leaders in New Delhi – it is equally the responsibility of all the functionaries and *karyakartas* at all levels.

But how is our alliance at the Centre also an opportunity? Because, India's democratic system, which is one of her greatest assets, has for the first time given the BJP an institutional context in which to interact with so many political parties. These parties represent the aspirations of different sections of our society.

A Common National Purpose

Being partners in an alliance, we now have an opportunity to let them know our basic beliefs, our tradition and our people better. At the same time, it is an opportunity to learn about our partners and the people they represent. Out of this interaction based on a common need will emerge a strongly shared common national purpose.

A word of caution, however, would be in order. I have earlier mentioned about the initial hiccups in the BJP-led alliance Government. There is a danger of the impression gaining ground that this is like a quarrelling business house where some partners do not see eye to eye with others. If such an impression gains ground, then it would be unfortunate.

National Agenda for Governance

Each one of the alliance partners contested the general election on their own manifestoes. But after the election, to facilitate smooth functioning of the Government, we evolved through discussion a common programme of action. We have called it National Agenda for Governance that is based on those points on which everybody agrees. By and large, it contains the programmes we mentioned in our Manifesto.

The cornerstone of this agenda is consensus and cooperation as opposed to the confrontationism of previous governments. Since we have an agreed upon agenda, I see no scope for conflict over its implementation. However, there are other issues which need to be resolved and I am sure Shri Vajpayee and Shri Advani will do that successfully.

Our workers must remember that a coalition Government functions under many compulsions. We have to be realistic about the situation and our workers must realise working as part of a coalition, the BJP can only do this much and no more.

At the same time, these compulsions cannot force us to compromise on basic principles. And we have proved this – for instance, we stand firm on the question of probity and integrity in public life. Nor, for that matter, will we ever compromise on the nation's and citizens' security.

The Significance of the National Agenda

We have established a coalition government at the Centre. Running a coalition government of this nature and composition is an extremely challenging task. But we are performing this task by creating a common basis – in the form of the National Agenda for Governance – for all the partners of the alliance to work together.

Politics of *Samanvay*

Many of our allies have divergent ideological and political backgrounds. Our adversaries tried – and even succeeded for some time – to isolate us in Indian politics and ensure that no party would agree to support us and work together with us. But we dashed their evil plans and emerged as the only party that can credibly change the composition of Indian politics.

Indeed, for all its brevity – it is only eight pages in length – the National Agenda, which was prepared mainly on the basis of our Party's election manifesto, is a remarkable milestone in the journey of the politics of *Samanvay*.

No party, other than the BJP, has stated it with such firm conviction that India's problems are too complex and too numerous to lend themselves to be solved by any single political party. No party, other than the BJP, has made such a fervent appeal for a national consensus on all the major national issues crying out for a solution. This is not a matter of expediency for us.

Harmonising Disparate Interests

Then why have we done so? We firmly believe that India can become a great nation only by re-orienting its polity on the lines of *Samanvay* as outlined in our National Agenda. This is not an easy process. But our strength gives us the capacity to overcome these crises. Our practical perspective allows us to harmonise and integrate disparate interests and go forward to a higher level of strength.

Internal Security

Years of soft-peddalling the threat posed by terrorist, subversive and secessionist activities to India's integrity as well as the lives of innocent citizens, has created a fear psychosis among the people in vast stretches of our country. One of the sacred duties of the state is to protect the life and property of the common man. Previous governments, propelled by their narrow vision limited to electoral politics, failed to fulfil this responsibility.

Deep Inroads by Pak ISI

As a result, Pakistan's ISI has been able to make deep inroads. From Kashmir to the North-East, from Uttar Pradesh to Tamil Nadu,

the ISI has built up an elaborate network to spread terror. In recent times, we have witnessed the alarming spread of subversive activities by ISI-backed Islamic fundamentalist organisations in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Shri Advani was the target of a conspiracy hatched by these organisations. By the grace of God, he escaped a dastardly attempt on his life in Coimbatore during the election campaign. Tragically, more than 50 innocent people lost their lives in that incident. Recently, a senior ABVP leader, Shri K.R. Paramasivam, was murdered by fundamentalists at Madurai. The Tamil Nadu State Government appears to be unable to cope with this problem whose magnitude is multiplying with each passing day.

There is now irrefutable evidence that the ISI has a hand in fomenting secessionist violence in the North-East. There is also evidence that the ISI has made inroads into Uttar Pradesh. For almost a decade now, the ISI has been active in sustaining the bloodletting in Jammu and Kashmir. Delhi has witnessed a series of bomb blasts masterminded by ISI agents.

India seen as a Soft State

It is because the Indian state came to be seen as soft and incapable of taking tough decisions that our nation's enemies became increasingly audacious. The Purulia arms drop incident is an example of the increasing impunity of those who want to destroy India's unity and integrity. Recently, an entire shipload of arms and ammunition was intercepted near the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. To prevent such incidents in the future, the Government must identify the culprits and make the facts public. I have no doubt that the BJP-led Government will do so.

Naxalite Groups

Yet another issue of concern is the murderous activities of the various Naxalite groups operating in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and some other States. In the name of waging "class war", all that they have succeeded in is unleashing violence that feeds on itself. Instead of solving problems, they have added to the law and order problems of the States where they operate.

Illegal Infiltration

What has further aggravated the internal security scenario is the continuing large scale illegal infiltration across our eastern borders. The vote-bank politics of the Congress and our other adversaries is primarily responsible for this continuing trans-border infiltration. Some time back, official estimates put the number of such infiltrators at 1.7 crore. Apart from creating economic and social tensions in the North-Eastern States as well as West Bengal and Bihar, unchecked infiltration also poses a severe internal security problem. To under-estimate it would be to court disaster.

Government Initiates Significant Steps

I am happy to report that the Government has already initiated steps to combat the threat posed by anti-national and disruptive forces as well as eliminate the ISI menace, and to restore a sense of security among the citizens. Shri Advani, as Home Minister, has already promised a multi-purpose identity card. He has also promised action to pre-empt terrorist violence by toning up the intelligence gathering system and making security more effective through better coordination between the various agencies.

In this context, I would like to mention that the National Agenda for Governance has categorically asserted that "we are committed to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens in all parts of the country. For reaching this goal, we will take effective steps to create a riot-free order and a terrorism-free India." Unlike previous governments, our administration shall not be found wanting when it comes to summoning political will in fighting terrorism.

General Law and Order Situation

There is yet another aspect of internal security in crying need of attention, and that is the general law and order situation. Human life and property is greatly threatened by the increasing activities of anti-social elements and underground mafia dons in various parts of the country. To combat this development, the law and order machinery has to be toned up and made accountable for any lapses in protecting innocent citizens.

North-East: Problems of Integration

The 'Seven Sisters', as the north-eastern States are referred to, have been neglected for far too long. I am not referring to economic neglect. In fact, the Centre has despatched thousands of crores of rupees for development work. But very little of this money has actually reached the people for whom it was meant. The bulk of the funds was pocketed by corrupt local politicians and an equally corrupt bureaucracy.

The present divisive and disturbed situation in the North-East has a historical background that goes back to British and even pre-British days. The region was a mosaic of small kingdoms ruling over diverse ethnic communities. The British rulers deepened the divisions and tried to give the diversities an anti-India dimension. In the beginning, they bought peace with the small kingdoms by letting them rule their own territories. But as they started to increase the colonial stranglehold, clashes inevitably began, leading to alienation of the people from the centralising authority.

When India became independent, there were hopes that democracy would help create institutions of self-governance and build new bridges with the national mainstream. As a matter of fact, the democratic process actually helped in creating new links between the North-East and New Delhi. Had New Delhi followed a consistent approach of caring and understanding, much would have been achieved by way of developmental and emotional integration with the rest of India. Alas, that was not to be.

Basic Problems

The problems of the people of the North-East are unique and different from those of the people elsewhere, contributing to their sense of alienation from the rest of India. On the one hand there are problems of development that are essentially economic in nature. The geographical distance of these states from the heart of India and the lack of infrastructure covering this distance is the other reason.

Economic deprivation breeds resentment and anger against the state; physical distances create a sense of psychological alienation. The two together provide a happy hunting ground for separatists and terrorists. Therefore, the Government will have

to work on both fronts – it will have to step up effective development activity and rapidly create the communications infrastructure to shorten the geographical – and thus mental – distance that separates the heart of India from its north-eastern arm. We cannot overlook the fact that all these are border States and thus of strategic importance. A third factor that can further the cause of integration is the strengthening of the democratic process in this region.

High Priority must be given to Socio-economic Problem

Our Manifesto promises to give the socio-economic problems of this region high priority and I have no doubt that the Government will fulfil its responsibility. We must never forget that the people of these States are Indians too; unless the state takes care of them, makes them feel wanted and integrate them with mainstream Indian society, we cannot expect them to be loyal to the state. This is a challenge before the Government.

On its part, the party has expanded its organisational network in the North-East and barring one State, we have had organisational elections everywhere this time. Electorally, too, we have improved our position. We have to now play a greater role in the process of integration.

Solving the Jammu & Kashmir Problem

The situation in Jammu & Kashmir continues to be grim and there is no ground for complacency. While the installation of an elected Government has helped contain secessionist activities to an extent, terrorists – both foreign and Indian – aided and armed by Pakistan, continue to strike terror.

Of particular concern is the repeated massacre of Hindus. Twenty-three Pandits were killed near Srinagar in January on the eve of Republic Day. On the night of 17 April, terrorists killed 26 Hindus at Prankote village in Udhampur district. These targeted attacks are obviously aimed at creating terror among the State's remaining Hindu community and forcing it to migrate. Already 2.5 lakh Kashmiri Pandits, forced out of their homes in the Valley, are living in various refugee camps. Numerous innocent Muslims, too, have fallen victim to terrorism; many of them have fled the Valley.

Terrorism must be Stamped Out

This situation cannot be allowed to continue forever. Jammu & Kashmir has witnessed bloodletting for too long; the time has come for a durable peace. This can be achieved only with the active cooperation of the State Government, the security forces and the Central Government. Terrorism has to be stamped out of this State if future generations are to be spared the agony of the past decade.

Kashmiri Hindus

I also call upon the Central Government and the State Government to evolve a package that will enable the displaced Kashmiri Hindus to return to their ancestral land with full dignity, honour and protection. Till such time this is possible, their welfare must remain the concern of the Government.

Deal firmly with Pakistan

We also need to be firm with Pakistan which is responsible for continuing to foment terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir by sending foreign mercenaries and arms across the border. Good relations between India and Pakistan will be possible only when the latter reciprocates by discontinuing the policy of fomenting violence in India that it has been pursuing all these years. The situation brooks no further delay in bringing Pakistan to heel.

Pakistan and India's External Security Scenario

Not content with actively promoting trans-border terrorism in India through its ISI, Pakistan has now gone ahead and test-fired its intermediate range surface-to-surface ballistic missile. Pakistan has named the missile Ghauri and claimed that it has a target range of 1,500 km and a capacity to carry a payload of 700 kg.

Message of Ghauri

This is not merely an exercise in flexing muscles or scoring points. Pakistan has done two things - first it has announced to the world that it has the capacity to strike at Indian targets with nuclear warheads; and, second, Islamabad has sent Delhi a political message rooted in history.

Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghauri was the first Islamic invader to attack Delhi in 1191. Prithviraj Chauhan defeated him but spared his life. Ghauri returned a year later, defeated Prithviraj Chauhan by taking recourse to treachery, and laid the foundation for alien rule in India. By test-firing Ghauri, Pakistan has reminded us that history could be repeated.

We cannot afford to ignore this threat and further imperil India's security. Our history is replete with missed opportunities to protect our security interests. We are painfully aware of the debacle of 1962. We are also aware of the urgent need to address our security requirements.

We must look after our Security Interests

In the post-Cold War world, we have to look after our own security interests and we cannot be seen to be lagging behind those who are openly hostile to us. For all their alleged concern about peace in the region, those who want to impose discriminatory regimes like NPT and CTBT on us have constantly turned a blind eye to Pakistan's belligerent attitude.

This is the reality and we have to learn to cope with it. Our Government has already initiated steps towards the setting up of a National Security Council for a comprehensive security review. It would be in the fitness of things not to succumb to Western pressures on the manufacture and deployment of Agni and Prithvi missiles. Let us learn from history and not be tricked by today's Ghauri.

Friends, the BJP has always believed in peace and prosperity among nations. We definitely believe in good and constructive relations with our immediate neighbours. But no lasting relationship can be built at the cost of our nation's interests and security. Indeed, it is our duty to resist any form of international blackmail that compromises national security.

Institutions of Democracy and our Constitution

A democracy survives on the strength of its institutions. Over the last three decades or so, these institutions – the executive, the legislature and the judiciary – in our country have been sapped of their vitality and atrophied to a great extent. In recent years,

corruption in high places of the executive and apparent confrontationism between the institutions have only worsened matters. Our legislatures have suffered on account of criminalisation of politics and the increasing use of muscle and money power in elections. There is also the malaise of defections that needs to be removed from the body politic.

Each of the three pillars of our democracy has a defined role. But there are also undefined areas and powers. For the smooth functioning of democracy, they need to harmonise their functioning. If they are in constant conflict with each other or busy trying to establish their supremacy over the other, then democracy cannot function. Worse, the dignity of these institutions suffers erosion and people lose faith in them.

Electoral Reforms must be Undertaken Urgently

The executive, the legislature and the judiciary are sacred institutions and their sanctity has to be restored. This is something which cannot be done by any one party; it calls for an all-party effort. For many years now, we have been hearing about comprehensive electoral reforms, but we have seen only minor cosmetic changes.

I urge the present Government to proceed expeditiously on this front and use the Goswami Committee report as the guiding document. These reforms would go a long way in putting men and women of integrity and mettle in legislatures.

Yet another institution that has suffered loss of credibility is that of the Governor's office. Previous Governments converted Raj Bhavans into extension counters of the ruling party at the Centre and made merry use of Article 356 to dislodge inconvenient but duly elected governments. Nowhere has this been so obvious as in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. We have also seen Governors facilitating the corrupt ways of certain Chief Ministers.

Many of these Governors have been replaced with individuals of proven integrity and I am sure they will stand by constitutional propriety. Let us show the way to restoring to the Governor's office its due prestige.

Constitutional Review

We have promised the setting up of a Commission of experts to have a relook at certain provisions of the Constitution that have outlived their purpose or need to be updated to keep pace with the times. The Constitution must be a living document adaptable to changing situations. Apprehensions have been expressed by certain quarters about the nature of these changes. I see no reason for these apprehensions because the "basic structure" of the Constitution has to remain unchanged.

What we need is a Constitution that is both an instrument of change and a vehicle for social transformation. Hence, the need for a fresh look at certain provisions in the light of the experiences of the last five decades.

Centre-State Relations and Smaller States

The era of confrontation between the Centre and the States has been left behind. We are standing on the threshold of a new era where a strong Centre and strong States will work together and in tandem for the creation of a strong India.

Sarkaria Commission's Report should be Implemented

We have always pleaded for harmonious Centre-State relations, greater fiscal as well as functional autonomy for the State Governments and decentralisation up to the grassroots level. The time has now come to put this into action. There already exists the Sarkaria Commission's report which has been allowed to gather dust all these years. The first step would be to implement this report and further update those portions of that have become dated.

This is a golden opportunity for us to break with the past practice of Chief Ministers rushing to Delhi for the smallest of clearances and permissions. Shri Vajpayee, in his address to the nation, has already hinted at greater decision-making powers for Chief Ministers, especially in the field of infrastructure. That has to be now given a concrete shape through the forum of the Inter-State Council.

Creation of New States

I would also like to point out that the creation of Uttaranchal, Vananchal and Chhattisgarh cannot be delayed any further. Smaller States facilitate balanced development, efficient administration and fulfilment of the democratic aspirations of the people. We have already committed ourselves to the creation of these new States in both our Manifesto and the National Agenda for Governance. Hopefully, the people in these regions will benefit immensely from this step and development that has eluded them all these decades will at last reach them.

Many-sided Campaign needed against Corruption

Deeply entrenched corruption has become a major problem in the path of India's rapid and egalitarian economic development. The experience of all the struggles against corruption so far shows that the issue has been taken up mainly as part of the political struggle between different parties. Occasionally, some of these struggles receive widespread mass support and transform themselves into people's campaigns, even resulting in change of governments.

But has this really made any significant dent in the problem? No. Corruption has crossed all limits in high places and alarmingly expanded in low places. Why? Because, it has been insufficiently realised at the political level that the campaign against corruption needs to be waged at the systemic level by focusing on four critical areas.

Reduce Scarcities

First, scarcities in the economy must be removed. As long as ours is an economy of shortages and scarcities, there is bound to be corruption and irregularities.

Remove Delays

Secondly, delays force people to resort to corrupt practices, often against their own wishes. We must remove the scope for delays by suitable administrative and judicial reforms at all levels. All the procedures in decision-making bodies should be made transparent and accountability fixed on decision makers.

Societal Restraint against Wrong Doing

Thirdly, unless there is a restoration of moral, cultural and societal restraint against wrong-doing, no amount of legislation and administrative action can fully check corruption. Fifty years ago, a corrupt person earned the censure of his organisation, community and society. Today, society itself has become inactive in its response.

Punishment

Fourthly, Government must ensure fast and unbiased investigation, prompt prosecution, and, exemplary punishment so that those guilty of corruption are brought to book.

State of the Economy and Importance of *Swadeshi* & *Swavalamban*

Friends, the state of the country's economy which our Government has inherited is extremely worrisome. There is a prolonged recession in the economy. Agricultural growth has stagnated. Industrial production has slowed down. Exports have slumped. In spite of our banks sitting on Rs. 60,000 crore of lendable resources, our farmers and entrepreneurs, especially the small ones, are starved of adequate and timely bank finance.

High interest rates, coupled with the lack of proper credit delivery systems and marketing facilities, have ensured that the vast unincorporated sector or the '*Bhagidari Sector*' of services and traditional occupations is left to fend for itself. It must be noted here that the very sectors – agriculture and the self-employment sector – which have the potential to create maximum productive employment as well as an egalitarian income distribution have been the victims of prolonged policy neglect and institutional apathy.

The ailing or terminally sick Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), in which tens of thousands of crores of public investment has taken place, have become a big drain and drag on the economy. The picture of the corporate sector is not too rosy either. Cheaper and easier imports, some of them forced by the new WTO rules, are threatening many an Indian industry. The recent controversies over 'basmati' rice and *haldi* have shown that the emerging patent regime threatens our agriculture and bio-diversity wealth.

Legacies of Previous Governments

Instead of facing the situation squarely and preparing the national mind and the nation's indigenous economic players for the challenges ahead, the previous Congress and UF governments created a false and dangerous impression that the solutions to India's problems lie only in opening up our economy to multinational corporations, foreign investments, unbridled consumerism and the globalisation agenda as set by the WTO.

Gross mismanagement of the nation's economy by the previous governments is illustrated by the huge mountain of foreign debt on which India is sitting today. Over one-fifth of our hard-earned foreign exchange earnings are eaten away by annual debt-servicing. If we add the likely consequences of unchecked globalisation to this, it is safe to visualise a major externally-induced crisis rocking our economy in the future, on the pattern of the crises that hit Mexico, Korea, Thailand and other countries recently.

Lack of National Self Confidence

At the root of this alarming situation is the fact that our previous rulers abandoned the values of *Swadeshi* (economic nationalism) and *Swavalamban* (self-reliance) - values which energised every patriotic Indian in pre-1947 days to challenge the might of the British empire. The lack of national self-confidence has become so prominent that 50 years after Independence, we as a nation cannot even conduct the affairs of our state in our Rashtra Bhasha, Hindi, or in any of the other Indian languages.

Importance of Self Reliance

This approach will land India into a serious mess. Hence, it must be changed. It can only be changed by inculcating the spirit of *Swadeshi* and *Swavalamban* in all the decision-making arms of the government, industry and society. We must once again assert that India can be built only by Indians. Foreign investments and foreign technology are welcome, but they can only have a supportive and secondary role in our nation-building strategy. Even where they are sought, the benefit to the nation must be thoroughly studied and ascertained.

Attending to Farmers' Problems

Nearly three-fourths of the people in this country live in our villages and agriculture continues to remain the backbone of India's economy. Yet, this crucial sector has been ignored by successive governments. So much so, we can no longer take our food security for granted.

Our goal has to be two-fold: We have to give agriculture its due place in the economy and change the anti-kisan mindset that has shaped government policy till now. I call upon the Government to expeditiously step up investment in this sector and address the farmers' problems without any delay.

In the last few months, we have witnessed tragedy descend upon farmers who lost their crops due to nature's vagaries. Farmers can be protected from ruination through effective and comprehensive insurance policies. This should be actively considered by the Government, more so because we have already promised to provide this safety net to those who toil to feed the country's teeming millions.

There has been a consistent demand for higher remunerative prices for agricultural produce. With costs of input escalating, farmers no doubt deserve higher prices. I am happy that the Government has already announced an increase in wheat prices.

But we should not ignore the needs and interests of landless farmers and agricultural workers. Land reforms and land redistribution should be actively pursued by the Government as it still remains an unfinished agenda of independent India.

Empowering the Weaker Sections

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay had inspired us to reach out to the last man in the last row. For us in the BJP, this is not merely a political slogan. It is intrinsic to our social philosophy that is rooted in Integral Humanism. We have continuously tried to use politics as an instrument of social change and as a means to eradicate all that is wrong in our society. Our effort has been to socially, politically and economically empower every segment of society.

Inclusivist Approach

We, however, have shunned the path of social conflict and confrontation, choosing instead the path of *Samajik Samarasata* (social harmony). Our aim has been to harmonise the various sections of society into a composite whole free from exploitation and suppression of any kind. Instead of practising segregation and exclusivism, we have constantly sought to unify the various fragments of society through an inclusivist approach.

This is in sharp contrast to the caste politics of some political parties. These parties do not believe in integrating the great Indian family, but in perpetuating divisions. These parties do not believe in resolving differences, but in encouraging conflict and confrontation. Theirs is a vision limited to electoral gains; ours is a vision of a resurgent Indian society free of caste and gender disabilities.

Swami Vivekananda once said of India's suppressed classes, "These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years... They have suffered eternal misery..." Five decades after Independence, these people are yet to taste the fruits of freedom. Most of them continue to suffer silently and have no voice in the decision-making process.

While it is true that a lot has changed, it is equally true that a lot more needs to be done to wipe out the blot of caste disability and discrimination from our society. Great men like Narayana Guru, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar have, through their lives, shown us the way to combat caste disability and discrimination.

Need to Empower Deprived Sections

Friends, governments can pass laws to fight this evil. There is no dearth of such laws. In fact, much before Americans legislated on civil liberties, India had adopted a law abolishing untouchability and discrimination. But laws alone are not sufficient. What is needed is raising consciousness levels and empowering the deprived sections. This can be done by a political organisation like ours.

Ten years ago, we adopted a policy on the problems of the Scheduled Castes at Agra. We followed this up with a Social Charter

at Bangalore. Over the years, we have increased our representation of Scheduled Caste legislators, both in State Assemblies and Parliament.

Similarly, we have been in the forefront for demanding the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes. Their social and economic problems are of a different nature and they should be tackled with a greater degree of sensitivity. By voting overwhelmingly for us, they have reposed their faith in the BJP. The party cannot afford to let them down.

Expanding Party Base Among Weaker Sections

We should now concentrate on expanding our base among these sections of society. We should reach out to as many people as possible and draw them into a larger, egalitarian Indian family where caste or tribal identities co-exist in perfect harmony and are not in conflict with each other.

On its part, the Government has already declared through the National Agenda its intention to empower these sections. Mere tokenism will no longer suffice; they have to have their rightful share of power; their right to dignity has to be protected; and, they have to be made co-sharers of the nation's prosperity.

Our Unequivocal Commitment to *Nari Shakti*

We have been in the forefront of promoting women's rights and demanding a just social order free of gender discrimination. True development will continue to elude us till such time women are truly empowered – socially, economically and politically.

Mere enactment of laws is not sufficient, although laws have helped remove discrimination to a great extent. What we need is attitudinal changes and the creation of mechanisms to harness the immense potential of women who constitute half of the country's population.

The girl child is an asset for both the family and the nation. Let us not see her as a burden, but nourish her and invest in her health and education. This is a responsibility of both society and the state to be shared jointly. Many an underdeveloped and developing nation has achieved a lot by following this model.

The BJP was the first party to officially adopt a formal resolution demanding reservation of 33 per cent seats for women in all elected bodies. Although a Bill was introduced in the 11th Lok Sabha, it could not be taken up for voting due to the intransigence of certain parties. I urge the Government to take up the Bill as soon as possible and seek an all-party consensus on this issue.

An Era Beckons a Nation

Friends, the sun has begun to set on the 20th century. It is also the end of a millennium that saw the subjugation of this great nation and the destruction of its glory. Centuries of the exploitation of our riches and our people by invaders and colonisers could not break the spirit of this nation, but it left us poorer.

Poverty and Squalor

Today, we have more than a third of the population living in heart-wrenching poverty and squalor. Millions of people live in rags and without a decent shelter. Women and girls have to trek for miles for a pot of water in thousands of villages. Illiteracy and disease, malnutrition and hunger afflict a sizeable section of the population. The cities are teeming with unemployed youth; instead of being in schools, children toil in fields and hazardous industrial units. Thousands of children die every year due to lack of medical care and nutrition. Our maternal mortality rate is one of the worst in the world.

This is not the country we aspired for; this is definitely not the country that we wish to leave behind for our future generations. India deserves much better than this.

Common Man needs Greater Attention

The politics of independent India may have served the interests of parties and their leaders, but the day-to-day problems of the common man, linked to his very survival, have remained unattended. To solve these problems, we need a shift in the nature of Indian politics—from the confrontationist to the constructive mode—and a change in the mindset of all parties. We have to work together if the lot of the common man has to improve.

It is in keeping with this spirit, and to encourage a consensual approach to national problems, that we have adopted the National Agenda for Governance whose perspective is not bound by political expedients but national interests. A broad consensus exists on some issues, and we have started with those. Let us now seek consensus on other issues, too. We have held out our hand of cooperation; we now look for a reciprocal gesture. The people of this country have suffered too much and for far too long. Let us together work for their betterment. This is my appeal.

Heavy Responsibility Lies on our Party

My predecessor had predicted at the Plenary Session in Mumbai that India was destined to enter the 21st century led by powerful nationalist forces. That prediction has come true. But it has also imposed a heavy responsibility on us and our friends.

We are standing on the threshold of a new era of optimism and opportunity that beckons India. If we are able to seize the opportunity and build on the optimism, we can lead India into an era that will restore to this great nation its lost glory. If we resolutely fulfil our responsibility, I have no doubt that the 21st century will see India once again emerge as the fountain of human light, the apex of human civilisation, the exemplar of courage and humanity and a settled society.

Let us dedicate ourselves to this noble and sacred task ahead.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Jaipur

21-23 August, 1998

I welcome you all to this first meeting of the party's newly-constituted National Executive.

I took charge as President of the Party at the National Council meeting in Gandhinagar in May in circumstances that were extraordinary.

The BJP, along with its allies, had just formed the first truly non-Congress Government at the Centre under the able leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Naturally, the bulk of our talent had to be seconded to the Government. But that did not deter us since this party has a wealth of talent.

We are now meeting in this historic city of Jaipur against the backdrop of impending election to the Rajasthan Assembly later this year. It would be in the fitness of things to take stock of these past five months and, on the basis of our experience, prepare ourselves and our cadre for the coming months.

Significant Steps taken by the Government

Between May and August many important events have taken place. Under the dynamic leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Government has passed the litmus test of managing the imponderables of coalition politics. A decisive step forward has been taken in the form of the five nuclear tests. A pro-people Budget rooted in *Swadeshi* has been presented and passed in the most trying circumstances. The Government has steered the country away from the anticipated fallout of economic sanctions. New schemes and

policies that benefit the weak and the poor have been adopted. The declining trend of public investment in the social sector has been reversed.

Nearly a decade of inaction and sloth that encouraged the canker of terrorism to spread its deadly tentacles across the length and breadth of the country has been replaced by a new determination and conviction to meet this grave challenge to India's internal security.

Significant steps have also been taken to solve the long-festering problems of the North-Eastern States. The North-Eastern Council has been made an effective body and a new pattern of funding development activity in the region has been evolved. The ceasefire in Nagaland has been extended by another year and though there has been an escalation of terrorism and ethnic strife in Assam, on the whole, there has been an improvement in the situation in this region.

Many of our critics have tried to paint a bleak picture of the last five months. But the successes of these five months outshine the failures of the past five decades. This Government has inherited the legacy of 50 years of misgovernance, missed opportunities and mistakes. Only the impractical would expect the wrongs of 50 years to be set right in five months.

Working within Coalition Limitations

Popular expectations from this Government, no doubt, were and continue to be, very high. But the reality is that we have had to work – and will have to continue to work – within the compulsions of coalition politics and with a wafer thin majority in a House where our political opponents, instead of playing the role of a constructive Opposition, are bent upon raising hurdles and obstacles.

In Gandhinagar, I drew attention to this reality. Looking back, I can say with some pride that we have been able to achieve a lot despite the limitations imposed on us.

At the same time, I would like to draw attention to the justified concern over the apparent lack of the spirit of accommodation among some of our allies. The BJP-led coalition, we and our allies need to remember at all times, agreed to work

together on the basis of the National Agenda for Governance. In a sense, this Government is as much ours as that of our allies – each one is a partner in governance and equally responsible for this government's failures as also its successes. In short, we have to work together.

I would urge all our allies not to air their perceived grievances or differences in perception through media, but to make the Coordination Committee an effective mechanism. I would also urge every ally to forsake, for the larger goal, minor issues. After all, we have set aside even some major issues on which we have campaigned lest they should create friction.

Success of Coalition is in National Interest

This coalition must succeed – not merely because we are leading the coalition, but because what is at stake is national interest. It is because of this larger interest that we have constantly striven, under the leadership of Shri Vajpayee, to iron out differences in perception and carry everybody with us. Let all of us not lose sight of the need for mutual understanding and mutual adjustment. The nation's, and not an individual's, interest should be our guiding spirit.

While taking stock of the Government's performance, some friends say that this has not been done or that has not been done. All that I can say is that five months is too short a time in the life of a Government that should last at least five years. I would urge our *karyakartas* not to be impatient – they must understand that this is not a BJP Government, but a BJP-led Government. They must also appreciate the fact that we have met the primary challenge of fighting corruption, terrorism and the economic downslide with political determination. Let us be patient and wait for the results of the Government's initiatives.

Resolution of Cauvery Water Dispute

In this context, I would draw your attention to what is clearly the biggest political success of this Government – the amicable resolution of the Cauvery water dispute. The more-than-two-decade-old conflict among four Southern States over the sharing of Cauvery waters was both a challenge and an opportunity – a

challenge to our commitment to conflict resolution through negotiation and discussion; an opportunity to put to test our faith in the politics of consensus.

I am sure all of us gathered here are proud of the fact that the Government overcame this challenge and seized the opportunity to put into practice the politics of consensus as opposed to the politics of conflict of previous years. As a result, what could not be achieved in more than two decades was achieved in less than half-a-year!

Rising Prices are a Matter of Concern

But it would be self-defeating if we were to overlook the shortcomings of this Government. The most visible shortcoming has been on the price front. While the Government cannot be entirely blamed for the ever-rising price index, the popular perception cannot be entirely ignored. The truth is that the current price rise is partly due to both the policies of the previous governments and mother nature's vagaries. Hoarders and blackmarketeers have seized upon the situation to create an artificial crisis and further fuel spiralling prices.

All this does not absolve the Government of its responsibility to guard the price line. On the contrary, I call upon the Government to take immediate remedial measures so that the mounting pressure on the common man can be eased. In the meanwhile, I call upon all of you to mount a vigil against hoarders and blackmarketeers. In his Independence Day address to the nation, the Prime Minister has promised stern action against hoarders and profiteers. Our cadre can play an active role in helping the Government to crack down on those who seek to profit from people's misery. We can effectively use our party organisation, especially the Yuva Morcha and the Mahila Morcha, for this purpose.

Party - Government Coordination

At Gandhinagar there was a suggestion that we should evolve a mechanism for greater coordination between the party organisation and the Government with the twin purpose of providing a link between *karyakartas* and *mantris* as well as providing a bridge between the Government and the people. A

committee was set up to prepare a blueprint for this purpose. The committee has submitted its report and we will soon have a suitable mechanism in place, working both at the Central as well as the State-level.

Another 'Unholy Alliance' In the Making

The past few weeks have seen the rapid convergence of anti-BJP political parties under the banner of "secular forces". Impatient for power and scornful towards the people's verdict, these parties are trying to forge yet another unholy alliance—the only thing that binds them together is political opportunism of the worst kind. The Left, as usual, is shamelessly eager to fish in troubled waters.

Had it not been for the sinister underpinning of their gameplan to destabilise and disrupt the political process, the over-vaulting ambitions of small leaders of smaller parties that do not constitute even a tenth of the Lok Sabha would have been laughable.

Machinations of Disruptive Forces

We are witness to the strange spectacle of the CPI(M) and the Congress discovering a natural ally in each other; of yesterday's crusaders against corruption joining hands with some of the most venal politicians; of rank casteist and communal politics being legitimised under the garb of "secularism".

We have to be constantly alert and on our guard against the machinations of these disruptionist forces that have neither regard for constitutional niceties nor respect for the people's mandate.

We need to educate the people and mobilise public opinion against the evil designs of these political opportunists. The nation cannot afford yet another spell of political uncertainty and crisis of leadership. To be complacent now could prove dear later — both for us and for the nation.

Empowering the Weaker Sections and the BJP

The cause of the disinherited, the discriminated and the deprived has been dear to us ever since we embarked on our political mission to transform the social and economic face of Indian society. Political freedom by itself is meaningless unless coupled with economic and social freedom.

Reservation for Women

Providing 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies was a promise we made years before anybody else had thought of this novel means of empowering women. The Government kept this promise by seeking to introduce the Bill in Parliament. Unfortunately, other parties, including the Congress, came up with unacceptable conditions instead of supporting this progressive, forward-looking legislation.

I would like to make it clear that we have all along maintained, and rightly so, that to divide women along caste and communal lines would be against their as well as society's interests. India can afford neither another caste conflagration nor another communal division.

On behalf of the party, I welcome the Prime Minister's Independence Day announcement of several initiatives for the welfare of women, including the path-breaking decision to provide free text-books to girls and the introduction of a low-premium insurance policy for women and the girl child.

Government takes Important Initiatives

I also welcome the initiatives on the rural development front, especially the decision to broad-base the crop insurance scheme to protect farmers' interests and provide additional resources for the people of the Kalahandi region who perhaps count amongst the most wretched of our poor and deprived.

Similarly, the Government has expressed its determination to uplift the lot of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. I urge the Government to hasten the process of their economic and social uplift. Let this be one of the primary tasks ahead. I also call upon the Governments of the States where we are in power to take a lead from the initiatives of the Central Government.

Jammu and Kashmir and the Menace of Terrorism

Among the numerous other liabilities that this Government inherited from previous regimes is the daunting task of fighting terrorism inspired, aided and abetted by Pakistan. Whereas the previous Congress and United Front governments, unable to muster political will, were content with adopting a line of least resistance

and thus allowing terrorism to flourish, this Government has demonstrated political will and made clear its determination to crush terrorism.

Given the BJP's stand on terrorism, and in keeping with the high expectations of the people, it was felt that this menace would be tackled immediately. But what needs to be appreciated is that a problem that has been allowed to fester for all these years cannot be solved in months. A number of steps have been taken to curb this menace and I have no doubt that in the coming months we will begin to see the results of these efforts.

One of the positive developments in Jammu and Kashmir is that the people, whose livelihood has been affected by terrorism, have begun to turn against the terrorists. With the people on its side, the Government will be able to take its battle against terrorism to its logical conclusion.

For those who despair, I have only this to say: Recall the flame of a lamp as it is about to die – it leaps up in great fury before it dies forever. So also with terrorism. We saw a similar pattern in Punjab where in the months preceding the demise of terrorism, the terrorists struck again and again in blind, desperate fury, picking on soft targets.

Let us draw inspiration from the supreme sacrifice made by Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and stand firm and resolute, convinced that we can wipe out the cruel face of terror forever. I have no doubt that this Government has the requisite political will and determination to combat terrorism and its attendant evils – be it in Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Kerala or the North-East.

Pseudo-Secularism and Vote-Bank Politics

At a time when as a nation we had hopefully left the rancours of the past behind us, the Congress and other pseudo-secular parties are desperately seeking to raise the ghost of communalism and resurrect the deplorable politics of vote-banks and minoritism.

We saw this when the Congress tried to raise the bogey of temple construction at Ayodhya, ignoring the fact that artisans have been at work in distant places for years now without violating any law of the land. Next, there was the absurd demand for communal reservations when the women's reservation Bill was

sought to be tabled in Parliament. In recent days we have seen insignificant incidents in Gujarat being blown out of proportion and misrepresented through outright lies and untruths.

Congress Trying to Rouse Communal Passions

We are now witnessing a misguided and highly dangerous campaign on the Srikrishna Commission report whose contents are far from being the conclusions of an unbiased judicial inquiry. In any event, it makes little sense to blame the BJP-Shiv Sena Government for the violence and bomb blasts in 1993. It is the Congress, which was in power both at the Centre and in Maharashtra, that failed to first prevent and then check the violence.

I have no doubt that all this is aimed at rousing communal passions, creating fresh discord and reopening old wounds. This mischief needs to be nipped in the bud. The best way to do so would be by informing the people of the true motive behind the campaign of the pseudo-secularists as well as through our actions. Let us be mindful of maintaining communal peace and order in the States where we are in power. The BJP has established that it can ensure a riot-free society. Let this record not be besmirched by the misadventure of our opponents.

Tasks Ahead

In these past months I have had the privilege of touring a large number of States and meeting local office-bearers and *karyakartas*. The interaction has been useful in more ways than one. I am also happy to report that the few States where organisational elections were incomplete, they have been completed without any problems. In fact, this year's organisational elections are a shining example of inner-party democracy and inner-party discipline. The credit for this goes to our *karyakartas*.

At Gandhinagar I said that with the formation of the BJP-led Government at the Centre, our task had not ended. I reiterate that our coming to power has made the party organisation's task much more difficult and important. The transition from being the main Opposition party to the main ruling party is by no means easy – neither is it over. It is a difficult transition and we can make it only if we are able to place the party's interests over personal interests.

Party should not become a part of the Establishment

The party organisation, we must remember at all times, cannot become – or even be seen to have become – a part of the establishment. The Government has its work to do, we have ours. The two, no doubt, must complement each other, but never should they become one.

There are still vast areas of the country, some far flung and others near, where we are yet to establish our presence. There are vast sections of the people to whom we must reach out and convince them about our worldview. There are several tasks, including social reform, which cannot be the sole responsibility of Government. As the nation's premier political organisation, we need to build on our strengths, not dissipate them.

There are many Challenges before the Party

We have to also cope with fresh challenges in the form of the upcoming Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. Not only do we have to improve upon our strength in Rajasthan and Delhi where we are in power, but we also have to wrest power from the Congress in Madhya Pradesh.

We can achieve both these Goals

All that we have to do is work shoulder-to-shoulder and pool in our efforts. If we could achieve what had been described as impossible by our opponents in the last general election, there is no reason why we cannot achieve the possible in the coming Assembly elections.

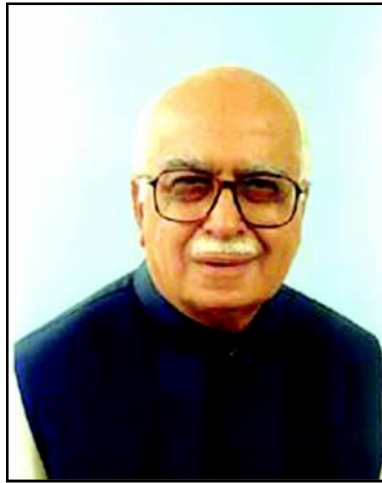
The people are looking up to us; neither the party nor the Government can afford to let them down.

Let me leave you with an inspiring thought penned by The Mother:

**Do not pretend – be.
Do not promise – act.
Do not dream – realise.**

Vande Mataram!





Presidential Speeches
SHRI LK ADVANI

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National Executive

New Delhi

11 April, 1998

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to this session of the National Executive of the Party. You are all well aware of the special significance of this session. It is the first meeting of the National Executive after our Party, along with its allies, formed the government at the Centre in the wake of the mandate received in the 12th general elections. It also happens to be the last full-fledged meeting of the National Executive during my tenure as the Party President. Hence, in the life of the Party, we are at that time of transition which ushers in a new era and ushers out the old.

Atalji's Charisma and Nation-wide Popularity

I welcome the new era by extending my heartiest felicitations to two of my valued colleagues who personify it. The BJP's emergence as the Party of governance is, of course, both effected and emblemized by Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who is also our Founder President. Many factors have contributed to the BJP's best-ever electoral performance in the recent elections. Tens of thousands of party activists, and many lakh others belonging to our ideological family have toiled for years to enable the BJP reach the present point. But no one can have any doubt, whatsoever, that, in this election, it is primarily Shri Atalji's stature in national life, his popularity, and the credibility and charisma that he commands in all sections of our society, which have catapulted the BJP into the new era of governance.

It has been my proud privilege to have worked closely with him for over four decades. Both the length and depth of my

association with him entitle me to claim a special share of the Party's joy in this hour of achievement. I am confident that Shri Atalji will now lead us to the higher achievement of providing a stable, strong and honest government to India at this critical juncture in our national history. Let us all pledge our fullest support and cooperation to him in this most challenging task yet undertaken by our Party.

The new era the BJP is about to enter is also represented by the Party's new President, to whom I shall pass on the baton soon. All the formalities of electing the new President will soon be over, and the Party's unanimous – but by no means anonymous – choice will be declared next week. He too is an old and highly respected colleague with whom I have had the pleasure of a long and close association. If Shri Atalji is the head of the government of the BJP alliance, our new President will head the BJP in governance. I, as the outgoing President, pledge my fullest support and co-operation to my successor.

The Journey from Bhubaneswar to New Delhi

The last meeting of the National Executive was held in Bhubaneswar on 19-21 December, 1997. Although the dates for the Lok Sabha elections had not been announced then, the Bhubaneswar meet unofficially kicked off our Party's election campaign with a historic rally in the capital of Orissa. That rally was indeed a pointer of things to come – in the country as well as in Orissa itself.

Charged up by the clarion call of voting for 'a stable government and an able Prime Minister', the people of India created electoral history in February-March 1998. Like in May 1996, the BJP once again emerged as the single largest party in the Lok Sabha, but unlike in 1996, our Party emerged as the only contender in 1998 for leading a coalition government at the Centre. Also, for the first time in republican India, a genuinely non-Congress leader became the country's Prime Minister, signalling the terminal decline of the 113-year-old Party.

BJP's Impressive Gain

In this election, our party not only increased its seat share – from 162 in 1996 to 180 in 1998 – but also its vote share: from 20.3

per cent to 25.46 per cent. The Congress, despite a much-hyped campaign by Shrimati Sonia Gandhi, could barely hold on its 1996 tally of 140. Its vote share actually dipped from 28.8 per cent to 25.68 per cent. It should be borne in mind that the Congress contested 471 seats in the recent election, as against the BJP fielding its candidates in 388 constituencies. The biggest blow was suffered by the United Front, whose seat share was reduced to less than half – from 183 to 86.

An objective study of the BJP's performance in the Lok Sabha elections shows spectacular successes in many states, but also worrying setbacks in a few others. We improved our position in big states like UP, Bihar and MP. We did exceptionally well in Karnataka, Gujarat and Punjab. We broke new ground in Orissa, Tamil Nadu, AP and West Bengal. In many of these states, just as our party gained from its tie-ups with its pre-poll allies, we too made a significant contribution to the gains of our allies.

On the down side, the results in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Haryana were extremely disappointing, and made a considerable contribution to our subsequent difficulties in government formation. A dispassionate analysis of the election results – of both the successes and setbacks – is necessary. Indeed, it is already taking place. All that I would urge is: shun self-flagellation and self-praise; shun charges and countercharges; and also shun the attitude of glossing over uncomfortable factors.

Regaining Mandate in Gujarat

Our electoral success at the Centre cannot dwarf our spectacular achievement in regaining the people's mandate in the Gujarat assembly elections. It is all the sweeter, since this success has been achieved by giving a fitting rebuff to those power-intoxicated politicians who had brought disgrace to the Party with their betrayal in 1995. I ask the National Executive to applaud all the leaders and activists of Gujarat who toiled to erase this blot on our Party's image. Similarly, let us applaud the achievement of our colleagues in Himachal Pradesh, where the Party has returned to power after a gap of slightly over five years.

Bright Future in the North-East

We now have an outpost in the North-East, too. For the first time, the BJP is a partner in a coalition government in the region—I am referring here to the government in Meghalaya. Our candidate in Outer Manipur came close to winning his seat. We won one seat in Assam, and came second in as many as ten. All this shows that the BJP has a bright future in the North-East, a region which is crucial for India's security, national integration and socio-economic progress. I ask the National Executive to give our colleagues in the North-East a big hand.

The Isolators have been Isolated

Beyond quantitative gains, the most significant qualitative gain has been the BJP's success in breaking the shackles of political untouchability. Those who sought to ostracise and isolate us in national politics by branding us as a communal party, have themselves been isolated today. As I had visualised in the National Executive meet in Jaipur in November 1996, the lion has indeed uncaged itself.

Today, the BJP has allies and supporters in practically all the states in India. We are, indeed, in the process of redrawing the political map of India. We can hence proudly proclaim today that the BJP, which completed 18 years on 6 April, has entered a new stage in life. The coming period will be one of rapid advances, bold forays, big achievements and bigger goals to aim at as we move along into the early decades of the 21st century.

Old habits, however, die hard. Unable and unwilling to conduct any serious introspection into the collapse of their anti-BJP strategy, the Congress, the Communists and other prejudiced adversaries of our Party are once again parroting the same old lies about the BJP. They will not succeed.

The BJP has no 'Hidden Agenda'

Friends, since this is the last major session of the Party's National Executive which I am presiding over, I seek your indulgence to dwell at some length on two interrelated questions: How did the BJP grow to become the governing party? And, how must it grow from now on to give a good account of itself as the Party in governance?

One of the fundamental laws of life is that the growth of any organism is a function of its fidelity to its own innate nature. This is true of men, and it is also true of human collectivities. Our party was born to uphold the values of nationalism, understood in the larger perspective of Integral Humanism. Nationalism is the identity mark of the BJP. It is our defining feature.

All-Embracing Commitment to Nationalism

Everything we hold dear and everything we have espoused in the 18 years of our existence – as also in the 26 years of our earlier incarnation as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and in the two years of merged existence in the Janata party – finds its expression in the broad rubric of nationalism. Thus, democracy, secularism, good governance, distributive justice, social justice, gender justice, greater powers to the states and panchayat bodies – all these and others carry meaning for us not as separate principles but as canons which are harmonized in the all-embracing commitment to nationalism.

Every step forward in our steady march from a marginal party in 1951 to the mainstream party in 1998 has been made possible by our uncompromising commitment to nationalism. Paradoxically, whenever we suffered setbacks in our journey, that too was because of our unflinching faithfulness to the cause of nationalism. We suffered a setback in 1979, when we were expelled from the Janata Party on the alibi of dual membership. We once again suffered a setback in 1984 elections because we refused to dilute our faith in Hindu-Sikh unity. On both the occasions, our reverses served as a springboard for our future success. Our reverses were reversed precisely because our actions were not subversive to our commitment to nationalism.

I am giving these historical examples only to immediately come to an important point of current debate. A lot of heat and dust was raised recently by our adversaries over the so-called 'hidden agenda' of the BJP. This controversy was sought to be created because of our decision to keep three issues in our election manifesto – Ayodhya, Article 370 of the Constitution and Uniform Civil Code – out of the National Agenda for Governance adopted by the BJP alliance.

BJP Manifesto and the National Agenda

The specious charge of the 'hidden agenda' has already been effectively refuted by the Prime Minister on the floor of the House. But since the National Executive is a party forum, and also since the three issues which have been left out of the National Agenda have been particularly significant in shaping our ideological identity, I feel duty-bound to account for this development and explain how this, too, is in conformity with our basic commitment to nationalism.

I have already stated above that individual principles do not carry any abstract meaning in themselves; rather, their significance and their relative importance in the overall scheme of things are determined by the higher imperative of nationalism. The imperative of nationalism in today's specific situation is to arm India with a stable, strong and honest government. In the context of the fractured verdict in the 12th general elections, in which the BJP secured a near mandate but not a clear mandate, a stable government could have come into being only by the coming together of the BJP, its pre-election allies and some post-election supporters.

Only Consensual Issues in NAG

In the ruling alliance that emerged, it was natural for the constituent parties to agree to keep only consensual issues in the National Agenda for Governance. But where does this leave the three above mentioned issues which have been part of our ideological identity? Have we acted in an opportunistic and unprincipled manner?

Two points need to be made here. One, a large area of governance has little to do with ideology – any ideology – except the overriding principle of national interests. Indeed, good governance in most spheres of national life becomes possible only when it is deideologized and depoliticized. Thus, if any issue, in spite of its inherent validity, acquires a strongly ideological character – in fact, so strong an ideological character as to make coalition governance, and hence stable governance, difficult – it is only proper to leave it out. This is precisely what we have done in the National Agenda.

But then what is our attitude now towards these three issues, consistent with the letter and spirit of the National Agenda and also in step with our spirited advocacy of national consensus? This question is certainly uppermost in the minds of all our activists and sympathizers and it is only fair that we enlighten ourselves on this crucial matter. I wish to submit a bold new approach for the consideration of the National Executive.

Our priority is to Build the *Rashtra Mandir*

As far as the government is concerned, it is guided by the National Agenda. However, as far as the nation is concerned, I feel the only right approach is to continue peaceful, non-confrontationist, and constructive debate and dialogue on all the three issues.

On Ayodhya, in particular, I submit that the issue be taken out of both the judicial and the legislative spheres and confined only to exploring a peaceful solution through concerted dialogue. Let us use the coming decade exclusively for nation building—in other words, for building a magnificent *Rashtra Mandir* in which all the children of *Bharat Mata* can live in peace, prosperity, and security, irrespective of their caste, religious or regional affiliations. This, in any case, is what our party had all along been saying while championing the cause of the *Ram Mandir* at Ayodhya.

Ten-Point Freedom Charter

Indeed, the highlight of our election manifesto was a ten-year perspective exclusively focussed on building a New India by presenting a ten-point Freedom Charter. This Charter pledged our Party's commitment to: (1) Freedom from unemployment by creating one crore additional jobs each year; (2) Freedom from homelessness by building 20 lakh new housing units a year; (3) Freedom from hunger by doubling food production by the year 2010; (4) Freedom from illiteracy by achieving full literacy by the year 2010; (5) Freedom from fear by creating a riot-free and terrorism-free India; (6) Freedom from social strife by creating harmony between all communities; (7)

Freedom from Centre-State discord by effecting a radical devolution of powers to the States; (8) Freedom for women by providing free education up to graduation and legislating 33% reserved seats for them in Parliament and State Assemblies; (9) Freedom from poor infrastructure by expanding and modernising India's base in power, energy, transport, telecommunications, information technology and other areas; and (10) Freedom from mental slavery by making every Indian believe in India.

A New Approach to the Party's Future Growth

Friends, now that we are in governance, let us resolve to make tangible and visible progress in all these ten directions. We must prove to ourselves and to posterity that we are faithful to the noble objectives in the party's Freedom Charter, most of which also figure in the National Agenda. And since the implementation of this Agenda needs a supportive and stable socio-political atmosphere, it is not only desirable but necessary that our Party adopts the new approach which I have indicated.

Good Governance and Good Leadership

If we survey the growth of our Party since its inception in 1980, we see that our fastest advance, in the period of 1989-1996, was due largely to ideological factors. But since the 1996 elections, it is not the same ideological factors which have sustained our growth. Equally emphatically, it is not these ideological factors which have brought us new political allies in different states. Rather, it is the people's growing perception that the BJP alone can provide a stable alternative and good governance, coupled with their faith in Shri Vajpayee's leadership, which are pushing us, in alliance with our partners, closer and closer to the majority mark.

This suggests powerfully that our Party must continue with this new approach in order to quickly consolidate its newly-won position as the country's mainstream Party, in place of the discredited, dispirited and dynastic Congress. What this means in specific terms is that the BJP must consciously and

systematically transform itself as a Party embracing all sections of society and all regions of India. Every Indian, irrespective of their caste, religion, region, race and language, must find the same place in our individual and collective mindscape. We must particularly strive to bring dalits, adivasis and minorities closer to our Party – and we must do so through a series of policies, developmental programmes, mobilisational strategies and honest communication.

This approach is fully consistent with our advocacy of Cultural Nationalism, because we have never understood *Hindutva* as a narrow, exclusive or discriminative concept.

Giving a Good Account of the Party in Governance

The above new approach, in fact, serves as a partial answer to the second question I posited in the earlier part of my remarks: How must the BJP grow from now on to give a good account of itself as the Party in governance?

The first requirement in evolving the right answer to this question is to fully realise the magnitude and the historic nature of the responsibility sitting on the shoulders of each one of us in the Party – from the highest functionary to the *karyakarta* in the lowest unit. Unless we realise the responsibility of governance, the other attitudinal and operational imperatives which follow will not take hold of us. As election after the recent election has shown, the people are unsparing in assessing the performance of those in power and also in unseating them from power, should the latter be found failing in their promises. We must duck this anti-incumbency trend.

BJP's Heavy Responsibility

The challenge of performance is all the heavier on our government because of its composition and the numerical base of support in the House. As the largest party in the ruling alliance – nay, the very mind and heart and soul of the ruling alliance – the BJP must act with the highest sense of responsibility, foresight and, if I may say so, with a sense of mission.

The attitudinal and operational imperatives that follow

from this realisation are, briefly, as follows:

1. Strengthen Unity and Discipline –

We must further strengthen unity, cohesiveness and discipline in the Party at all the levels, but especially at the top levels at the Centre and in the States.

2. BJP – An Instrument for a Fundamental Change –

The media, our allies, our adversaries, as also the people at large, will be closely observing the utterances and actions of our functionaries, our ministers, our MPs and our workers. Our performance in this regard should be exemplary and should give the hope of heralding a new culture of politics and governance. This, too, let us remember, is our solemn commitment in the National Agenda for Governance. Arrogance of power and the temptation to use the machinery of the State for personal ends must be resisted, since these are the vices which brought so much disgrace to the Congress Party. In this context, we must remember what Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya told to us, at a time when we were nowhere near the portals of power. He said: “Jana Sangh is not a party created merely to win and wield power. No. It is an instrument to bring about a fundamental change in politics and in national life.”

3. Constantly Enlarging the Area of Consensus –

Ours is a coalition government. Naturally, this places certain obligations and responsibilities – what can be called the *Dharma* of coalition politics – on all partners in the alliance. As far as the BJP is concerned, I would like all our colleagues, especially those in responsible positions in the state units, to realise that the interests of the coalition at the Centre are paramount. The Party’s strategies in states must be subordinate to its national strategy. As a broad policy, it should be our endeavour to develop the right coalition chemistry with our allies by constantly enlarging the area of common interests and shrinking – or, at any rate, inactivating – the area of differences.

4. The Importance of the Party –

The relationship between the ruling party and the government is a complex and delicate one in most democracies. Communist countries tried to solve it by merging the two structures—and many have paid the price for it. At the same time, democracies too have paid a heavy price whenever ruling parties neglected party work once they found themselves in the government. Since the BJP has assumed the reins of power for the first time at the Centre, we must be very attentive not to downgrade the importance of the Party. I would even say that the Party must closely watch and monitor the performance of the various ministries and departments and provide prompt feedback to the Prime Minister.

Specifically, there is an urgent need to create structures, mechanisms and channels of communication for building a proper relationship between the government and the party. This task is all the more pressing since a considerable number of our top functionaries are saddled with responsibilities in the government. We must ensure that views, suggestions and feedback from the Party regularly and promptly reaches the right people in the government and also that they are taken due note of.

5. The Importance of the Party –

Lastly, now that the BJP is a Party in governance, all our functionaries right down to the lowest *karyakarta* should devote our time and attention to people's issues or macro issues—and not to individual cases or micro-issues. The former bring social and political dividends. The latter are an inefficient, and often improper, utilisation of party functionaries' and government officials' time.

A New BJP for the New Era

All that I have said by way of answering the two questions I raised earlier suggests that the BJP must now become a NEW BJP. Only a New BJP can shoulder the responsibilities of the new

era that is opening up for both India and our own Party. The New BJP will be guided not by the issues of yesterday, but by the agenda of tomorrow. The New BJP will be fully alive to the changing world scenario and enable itself and India to face the challenges, and also seize the opportunities, maturing in the womb of the 21st century. The New BJP will not only be the Party in Governance, but the natural Party of Governance.

It is a historic challenge, a daunting challenge. We must not fail. And we shall not fail. As one philosopher has said, "In mighty enterprises, it is often enough to have had the determination." In our case, we not only have the determination but also the sound direction of Nationalism, which has sustained us in all the trying periods in our history.

It is with this expression of supreme confidence in the success of our mission that I close my opening remarks at this crucial meeting of the National Executive.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Gandhinagar

2 May, 1998

Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, President-elect Shri Kushabhau Thakre, and esteemed colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this meeting of the Party's National Executive, on the eve of the historic session of the BJP National Council beginning tomorrow.

The session qualifies to be called historic for three reasons. First, this is the first gathering of the National Council after the formation of the BJP-led government at the Centre under the Prime Ministership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Until now, we used to assemble for the National Council only as a Party of the Opposition. Tomorrow we will be meeting as a Party of Governance.

Secondly, the Gandhinagar session of the National Council will give the Party a new President, Shri Kushabhau Thakre, who has been elected unanimously to this post, and will lead the Party into the next century.

Lastly, tomorrow marks an important day in my own personal calendar. As I hand over the baton of presidency to Shri Kushabhauji, an unforgettable chapter in my own life will come to a close. Any such moment is necessarily charged with emotions and memories and thoughts of the tasks accomplished and of many more that remained unaccomplished.

The most powerful feeling and thought that grips me today is one of gratitude. Gratitude towards the Party and to the entire Sangh Parivar. All of you have given me more affection, more strength and more cooperation than anyone can ever long for. Hence, if I have accomplished anything, it is due to the support of all of you,

and the support of all those who constitute the mighty national force which our ideological movement has become today. For whatever has been left unaccomplished, I as President, own full responsibility.

Evolution of BJP into a Powerful Force

As I lay down my responsibility as President, my memory dates back to the Jana Sangh days even as my vision peeps into the next millennium. Between my memory of the past and the vision of the future lies the evolution of the Party from a small marginal group into a powerful nationwide force set to lead India into the next millennium.

The Jana Sangh was born after Independence. It was born in sacrifice. Late Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerji resigned from his prestigious position in the first ever national government formed after centuries, and founded the Jana Sangh, a miniscule opposition party. This is the very reverse of what happens today; now, parties are formed because the leader is not taken into government. The Jana Sangh was sustained by even greater sacrifices. Dr. Mookerji laid down his life at the altar of national unity. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay was assassinated in mysterious circumstances.

Fired by intense idealism and love of the motherland, hundreds of young men and women, many of them inspired and trained by the RSS, joined the Jana Sangh. Many of us sitting here, balding and greying, were among them. Unlike many political parties which were refashioned out of prefabricated ideas and structures, the Jana Sangh and its ideological reincarnation, the BJP, organically evolved over time to become a harmonious, strong and vibrant national force. And now the BJP is not just the head of a coalition government at the Centre, it is the most central idea of Indian polity today.

BJP – Propelled by Ideology and Idealism

As I look back on my years as President of this great Party, the picture I see is one of movement, constant movement. If electoral performance is one indicator of a political party's movement in a democracy, then the BJP has moved from the lowest point in its performance graph in 1984 to the highest point in 1998. This is a point of immense gratification for all of us. The primary reason for our extraordinary growth is the unique blend of ideology and idealism that sets the BJP apart from the rest of the political parties.

We have grown because the ideology of nationalism to which we are wedded is predestined to triumph. And the BJP is only an instrument in the political field which this ideology has found to achieve its victory. We have shown our fidelity to the ideology of nationalism at every turn in our political journey. Our very birth as a political party – as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951 and as the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980 – has testified to our unflinching commitment to the ideology of nationalism.

Faith in Value-Based Politics

During this period, every issue that our Party has taken up, and every issue that has helped our Party to grow from strength to strength, both electorally and in people's esteem, has been a testimony to our faith in value based politics.

Thus, our struggle against the Emergency Rule was a testimony to our commitment to the value of democracy, without which Indian nationalism is unrecognizable.

Thus, our campaign for the *Ram Mandir* in Ayodhya was a testimony to our commitment to the concept of cultural nationalism, without which not only the meaning of secularism but the very identity of India remains undefined.

Thus, our campaign for the full integration of Kashmir has been a testimony to our commitment to the ideal of national unity.

Thus, our espousal of *Samajik Samarasata* (social harmony) has been a testimony to our commitment to a higher notion of social justice, without which the cohesion of our society cannot be guaranteed.

Thus, our insistence on *Swadeshi* is a testimony to the value of economic nationalism, without which India cannot face the challenges of globalization.

Thus, our consistent struggle against corruption, especially corruption in high places, is a testimony to our commitment to the ideal of *Shuchita* (probity in public life), which is central to our concept of good governance.

Thus, our tireless championing of the legitimate aspirations of the farmers, workers, women, dalits, vanavasis, youth, and disadvantaged communities and regions of India has been a testimony to our commitment to the balanced welfare of all Indians,

without which a new, egalitarian India inspired by the ideals of integral humanism cannot be envisaged.

Each of the above issues has helped our Party grow. It may be argued that the BJP's growth as the country's mainstream party has occurred mainly on account of the decline of the Congress which until recently occupied that position. There is some validity in the argument. But the argument does not fully explain BJP's phenomenal rise. It does not answer the critical question: "Why did the BJP alone, and not any other party, succeed in filling the vacuum left by the Congress?"

BJP's Impeccable Nationalist Credentials

The correct answer, once again, hinges on nationalism as the only reliable guarantor of stability and growth for a political party. As long as the Congress was seen by the people of India to be the repository of national values and promoter of national interests, it had an unquestioned dominance in Indian politics. It was, indeed, the natural party of governance. When the people began to see the Congress as having lost its national purpose, their disillusionment with the party started. Until such time as a clear alternative emerged, the people experimented with several quasi-Congress governments.

But, simultaneously, frustrated with their experience of alternating between Congress and quasi-Congress governments, the people also began to view the BJP as a distinct choice. They did so because ours was the only Party that stood the test of nationalism in their eyes. That is why, after giving us a progressively higher representation in Parliament from 1989 onwards, the people made the BJP a ruling Party in 1998.

But the fractured nature of the mandate also clearly means that we have not yet fully won the confidence of the Indian people. It must be admitted that the BJP's growth-rate, remarkable though it is, has not been able to match the decline-rate of the Congress. Our efforts, therefore, to reach out organisationally to newer and newer areas, both geographically as well as socially, must continue unabated.

As things stand, one can even say that the people have today put us on probation in our new job. How well are we going

to acquit ourselves in this test? In my view, this newest test we are facing is once again a test of nationalism. The first and foremost imperative of national interest today is good governance (*Su-raj*). The extent to which we follow and implement the ideals of good governance is the extent to which we will have provided a testimony to our faith in nationalism.

A Challenging Situation

The first requirement in succeeding in this test is to recognize that this is not going to be an easy task, notwithstanding the best of intentions. We need to recognize this hard reality, so that we understand the full weight of our responsibility. The first six weeks of being in power have been a sufficient reminder of the extremely challenging situation we are faced with. Usually, a new government is granted a period of honeymoon. We have had no such luxury. As a matter of fact, it has been a period of much pain. The birth pangs of the new emerging from the womb of the old have not been inconsiderable.

But, perhaps, we should be grateful to the Almighty that He has tested our mettle in our infancy, and taught us the lesson of vigilance and survival early in life. The trials and tribulations of the first six weeks have steeled our resolve to stabilize and to strengthen ourselves. We shall overcome. We shall do so by virtue of our performance in government under the able leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

We Must Look to the Future

The new situation has increased the Party's responsibilities, both qualitatively and quantitatively. As I relinquish the office of the President of the BJP, I urge upon the Party not to sit on the laurels of the past, but to look to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

I see four major areas that demand the Party's attention if it is to consolidate itself as the natural Party of governance. They are:

1. Enhancing Governance Capabilities –

The BJP must enhance and enrich its governance

capabilities, which are different from political capabilities. We are called upon not only to clean up the mess created by the misrule of the past Congress and quasi-Congress regimes, but, even more importantly, to reorient and restructure governance according to our exalted vision of nationalism.

This means that all those of us who are entrusted with responsibilities in central or state governments must spend more and more of our time dealing with governance issues, rather than political issues—and, much less, the issues arising out of petty and ugly politicking. Simultaneously, we must train younger and newer people in the party in various governance-related tasks. The series of Training Camps we started last year have to be accordingly reoriented.

2. A Link between the People and the Government –

For a political party wishing to expand and consolidate its support base, there is simply no substitute to a close, constant and organic contact with the masses. If this is true for a Party in the Opposition, it is even more true for a Party in governance. We cannot depend on the bureaucracy or the media to communicate the government's policies and programmes to the people. Nor can we depend on them to communicate the people's problems and issues to the government. It is only the party organisation which can perform this vital function of being the two-way link between the people and the government.

3. Party should Induct Young Professionals –

As a Party of governance, the BJP must deepen and widen its horizon of concerns. The world around us is changing very fast. Much of the change is also being mirrored in Indian society. On the surface, there may be only, or mainly, negative changes in sight. But, on balance, the world is changing in a very, very positive direction. The most positive and heartening feature is the dynamism of our dreaming young people. They are full of energy and ideas, and even idealism. The BJP

must tap this youthful reservoir in order to constantly renew itself. In particular, we must attract more and more educated, skilled professionals of various disciplines into the Party and give them specific responsibilities.

4. Sound Ideology and High Idealism –

Last, but not the least, let me sound a word of caution. Experience all over the world has shown that power corrupts even the most committed and well-organised parties. We have seen what has happened to political parties in our country, including the once-great Congress Party. A party that lets itself be overwhelmed by the trappings of power inevitably loses its direction and sense of purpose. Such a party cannot remain cohesive for long, much less can it handle the historic task of delivering good governance.

The BJP is so far largely immune to this problem. But we cannot be complacent. It is necessary to constantly remind ourselves that ideology and idealism cannot be separated. Without high idealism ideology is hollow. And without sound ideology, idealism is a non-starter. This combination of a sound ideology and high idealism, which is the very birthmark of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the Bharatiya Janata Party, is something that we must consciously exert to preserve in the BJP of the coming years and decades. This alone can erase the image of the 'ugly Indian politician' which is prevalent among the common people.

Party will Prosper under Thakreji's Leadership

Even as I take leave of you as Party President, I warmly welcome Shri Kushabhau Thakre, the new President-elect to provide leadership to the party at a critical period. Indeed, we cannot find a more dedicated, selfless and unassuming an individual among us than Thakreji. He is uniquely qualified to provide inspiration, illustration and leadership to the Party. Thakreji knows that a party in proper shape can produce a government, but governments cannot produce parties. A

thorough organisational man, Thakreji, I am sure, will navigate us in the crucial years ahead by his own illustrious example of austerity and simplicity.

Friends, history has given us a major opportunity to serve our beloved nation. At the same time, history has high expectations from us. As I demit office, my heart is filled with the hope and confidence that our great Party will rise to the occasion. In the continuing endeavour, I shall continue to make my modest contribution.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

26 July, 1997

Fall of Government is Imminent

I welcome you all to this session of the Party's National Executive. All of you will agree that the extremely chaotic political situation which has developed in New Delhi invests this meeting of the National Executive with great importance. Since we last met here in the same hall on 6-7 April, 1997, the political scene in the country has changed dramatically, albeit on predictable lines.

The farcical nature of the United Front government is matched only by its in-built fissionability. When we met in April, this opportunist outfit had just survived a fatal attack by its supporting party, the Congress, by meekly submitting to its own decapitation. Nobody really believed that the miraculous feat of 'head surgery' performed on the UF government would add to its longevity. But the rapidity with which this unnatural Front is now beginning to fall apart has convinced one and all that the final countdown for the government of Shri IK Gujral has well and truly begun.

The intervening period has seen a major split in the Janata Dal, the principal party in the United Front, with its former President breaking away to form the rival Rashtriya Janata Dal. The split, along with the shocking behaviour of Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav and the Prime Minister's own role as a virtual accomplice in ensuring, till the very last moment, his survival in office, have eroded whatever little legitimacy the United Front had in ruling the country. These twin developments have further confounded the confusion and chaos within the United Front which has now started speaking in a babble of multiple tongues.

A Grave Insult to Parliamentary Democracy

Nothing illustrates the utterly unscrupulous nature of the UF-Congress alliance better than yesterday's grotesque developments in Bihar. For months after being chargesheeted, Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav stubbornly refused to resign. Worse still, the Congress and the constituents of the UF actively or passively helped him to remain in the office. He did ultimately tender his resignation, but only when he found that he could no longer escape from the long arm of the judiciary. Even this he did only after installing his own wife, Shrimati Rabadi Devi, in the Chief Minister's chair. A greater political novice than her it is difficult to find. At the same time, it is also hard to imagine a worse insult to the very system of parliamentary democracy.

Degeneration of Democratic Culture

The events in Patna prove conclusively that Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav's resignation is a sham, a transparent make-believe which will not fool anybody. Resignation under such circumstances implies accountability for the guilt committed. But what Shri Yadav's action signifies is his single-minded determination to keep the Chief Minister's office, and the ill-gotten gains of that office, with his own family. Resigning from the office of Chief Minister while on the verge of being arrested on a serious corruption charge, and making your own wife the Chief Minister, is not just farcical, it is downright fraudulent. It shows Shri Yadav's utter distrust of any colleague in his own party, revealing also the extent of degeneration of democratic culture in our adversaries' politics of pseudo-social justice and pseudo-secularism.

Immoral Politics Practised by UF and Congress

What has happened in Bihar is, thus, not an accidental, but a perfectly logical, denouement of the kind of immoral politics which is being practised by the UF and the Congress. It is crystal clear that the devious course adopted by Shri Yadav suits the interests of all his patrons: Messrs. Sitaram Kesari, IK Gujral and Harkishan Singh Surjeet. Neither he nor his benefactors wanted dismissal of the Bihar government and dissolution of the Assembly. The UF-Congress combine, which didn't think twice before wrongfully invoking

Article 356 of the Constitution in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat last year, conspiratorially allowed the country's most tainted politician to have his way until the very last minute – and beyond. It appears that this, indeed, was the 'compromise formula' which was being talked about in UF-Congress circles in the past few days.

The conclusion is, thus, inescapable: At no time in her republican history has India seen a government in New Delhi so unprincipled, so weak, so unrepresentative and so thoroughly unworthy of being called a government as the one headed by Shri Gujral.

During the past three-and-a-half months, the Prime Minister has fully lived up to our prognosis that the length of his tenure would be directly proportionate to his capacity to suffer insults to himself and to his high office. Not a day passes without the Prime Minister making a laughing stock of himself and bringing disrepute to India in the eyes of the world.

PM's Personal Craving for Power

In the beginning, Shri Gujral's sympathisers and well-meaning critics might have given him the benefit of doubt by attributing his pathetic condition to his helplessness. But as days passed, and as he unprotestingly took one insult after another from his own partymen and Front partners as well as from a scheming Congress Party, it was clear that the Prime Minister was a victim not so much of helplessness as of hypocrisy and personal craving for power. Nothing else can explain his rank capitulation in the case of Shri Joginder Singh's sudden removal from the helm of the CBI, or his double-faced dithering in the case of the chargesheeted ex-CM of Bihar, or his refusal to drop the three ministers in his Cabinet who have chosen to join the break-away RJD.

The issue is no longer why a scamster's proxy government headed by his wife should be allowed to exist. The issue now is why Shri IK Gujral's government should continue in office in the face of its utter moral bankruptcy.

As a matter of fact, speculations about the collapse of this rickety government no longer hinge around the question whether it is going to fall, but when and how soon. This is by now well understood both by the Congress as well as the constituents of the UF itself.

That is why, both the Congress President as well as his adversaries in the UF (especially the two communist parties) are positioning themselves for the poll and post-poll scenario. Notwithstanding the contradictions and conflicts among them, however, both are still driven by the common goal: 'Stop the BJP.'

Yet, the fact that the BJP is now unstoppable and will, this time round, come out right on top is well understood even by our adversaries in the Congress and the UF. This has created such panic and desperation among them that they are now going to absurd lengths to halt or, at least, decelerate the BJP's march.

What else can explain their foolhardy demand for the dismissal of the BJP-Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra over the recent unfortunate eruption of violence in Mumbai, in whose genesis too the Congress appears to have had a conspiratorial hand? As the Union Home Minister himself stated in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, the Congress is also hobnobbing with a known underworld don in Mumbai, lending clandestine support to his recent political campaign against the BJP-Shiv Sena government.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Congress is using the office of the state's discredited Governor to destabilize the BJP-BSP coalition government, besides trying to break our alliance with the BSP before the approaching mid-term polls to the Lok Sabha. In Bihar, it has openly come to the rescue of the most tainted politician in recent Indian history, in the vain hope of making a comeback in that state.

Utmost Vigilance Required

Our Party must maintain utmost vigilance in the face of the continuing machinations of the Congress and its allies in the UF to destabilize BJP-ruled states in the coming months. I am confident that our allies too realise this danger and will respond to it befittingly in the interest of democracy and creation of a credible and stable alternative to the Congress and the UF.

Nation Disgusted with the Pseudo-Secular Alliance

The manipulative politics of the Congress and the United Front has now run its course. Not even a miracle can either save the Gujral government or restore the lost credibility of this cabal of corrupt and power-hungry politicians. Even those sections of the electorate

who did not vote for us in the elections to the 11th Lok Sabha, have now seen through the stratagem of the United Front and the Congress – namely, that the shrill campaign to keep the BJP out in the name of fighting “communal forces” was just an alibi to capture unearned power. The entire nation is disgusted with the abominable conduct of the Congress, the Communists, the Laloo Prasad Yadav and their partners in the pseudo-secular alliance.

People Favour BJP

The times are changing. A new wind is blowing across the political landscape of India. The people have already made up their minds to propel the BJP and its allies to power at the Centre whenever the elections are held. I even think that the objective conditions today are ripe for the creation of a tidal wave in favour of the BJP and its allies. This possibility will become a certainty if our subjective preparations can match the objective conditions.

My confidence in this regard is based upon several factors reinforced lately by my reading and analysis of the tremendous response to the *Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra*. The *Yatra* enabled me and all those who travelled with me to feel the pulse of the masses. The one single loudly proclaimed message in all the smiles, greetings, hand-waving, applauding and sloganeering that the *Rath Yatra* met with in state after state was: “We, the people of India, want a change in leadership. We want a stable government. And we are convinced that only a BJP-led government, headed by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, can provide a stable and good government.”

Members of the National Executive will recall that, in our Bhopal session in July 1996 soon after the end of the 13-day rule by the BJP, we had resolved to expand the influence of our Party in newer social and geographical spaces – especially in the southern and eastern states. The massive response to the *Rath Yatra* in Kerala, West Bengal and Orissa (among other states) has clearly shown that the BJP’s influence is rapidly spreading in these areas. If we are able to strengthen our organisational base in these states, we shall certainly succeed in reaping electoral benefits in the coming election itself.

The pro-BJP mood that is building up in the country is, in considerable measure, also due to the unprincipled politics and disagreeable conduct of our adversaries. This constitutes the 'negative' vote in favour of the BJP. I would, however, like to emphasise here that, between now and the elections, our Party needs to vastly augment the 'positive' aspect of the pro-BJP mood. I urge that the entire Party machinery should be mobilised right away and in right earnest to prepare for the decisive electoral battle by focussing on the following 'positive' message:

Stability Card is Now with BJP

1. For decades, the Congress Party's trump card in elections has been the Stability Card. Since the formation of the Congress-backed UF government last year, a government whose entire tenure has been marked by perpetual instability and total uncertainty, the Stability Card has slipped out of the Congress' hands and has become lodged with the BJP. By now, the people feel convinced that the BJP alone is capable of giving the country a stable and honest government. But what needs to be emphasised in our campaign is the high socio-economic cost of instability and, hence, the imperative for the BJP and its allies to gain a comfortable majority in the Lok Sabha.
2. The BJP should make the elimination of *Bhay, Bhookh aur Bhrashtachar* the central plank of its electoral message.
3. There is a pressing need for the revival of the spirit of nationalism in the golden jubilee of India's independence. The BJP must continue to firmly espouse that genuine secularism has its roots in *Hindutva* or cultural nationalism, which has been the hallmark of our Party since its inception. Happily, a significant section of the minority communities is beginning to respond positively to this espousal. For example, Archbishop Arlappa of Hyderabad has publicly endorsed our concept of cultural nationalism and has affirmed: "I am a Christian by religion, but my culture is Hindu."

BJP – A Unifying Force

4. A big advantage to the BJP in the current vitiated socio-political atmosphere is our well-earned reputation of being a Party that unites the people on a firm national footing, in stark contrast to many of our adversaries' crude attempts to divide Indian society on caste, communal and parochial lines. We must further consolidate this important advantage in the run-up to the elections. Our earnest efforts to promote *Samajik Samarasata* (social harmony) in Punjab, UP and elsewhere, and our success in these efforts, need to be strongly highlighted.

BJP CMs Set An Example

5. The successful conference of the Chief Ministers of the BJP-ruled states in Jaipur on 25 June was, by any reckoning, a landmark event in the ongoing campaign to effect a thorough restructuring of Centre-State relations. This is an issue of utmost importance in the context of our Party's longstanding commitment to decentralisation of power for responsive administration and pro-people socio-economic development. We should make restructuring of Centre-State relations and greater financial and administrative powers to the states and, further, to the districts and village panchayats a major point in our pre-election and election agenda.

The importance of maximising the 'positive' element in the current pro-BJP mood cannot be over-emphasised. We need to do it not only to significantly increase our vote percentage so as to be able to gain a comfortable majority in the Lok Sabha, but also to make the BJP capable of delivering Good Governance after it comes to power. In short, let our motto in the coming crucial months be:

Let us get ready for Governance.

Let us resolve to give India Good Governance.

The Party held a *Chintan Baithak* (conclave for collective deliberation) of its senior functionaries at Virar in January this year. After a fairly intensive discussion on various issues concerning the

organisation, it was decided to observe 1997 as 'The Year of the Organisation'.

Nationalistic Ideology

Let us look at the situation dispassionately and assess both the strengths and weaknesses of our organisation in a holistic manner. The biggest strength of our Party, a strength that has stood us in good stead amidst all the tempestuous developments in Indian politics in the past four-and-a-half decades, is our nationalistic ideology and ideals on the one hand and, on the other, the two guiding lights of the Party – Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay – who were embodiments of that ideology and those ideals. Let us perpetuate this strength by ensuring that the Party's leadership at various levels continues to embody our time-tested ideology and ideals.

Destiny Beckons BJP

Many of our current organisational problems, excessive ambition, considerations of personal gain in politics, groupism, etc., can be attributed to two factors: our phenomenal growth in the past one decade and the 'environmental pollution' that the Party is exposed to. We must begin to tackle these problems firmly and without any further delay, especially when we stand so close to assuming the reins of power at the Centre.

Our biennial organisational elections are to be held this year. How smoothly and harmoniously we conduct them would be a concrete test of our success in implementing our Virar decisions.

Dear Colleagues, History is about to place an onerous responsibility on the BJP. Let us not be found wanting when Destiny entrusts us with the task of ruling this great nation and lifting it out of the morass of corruption and malgovernance into which the once-great Congress Party and its various offshoots have pushed it.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Bhubaneswar

19 December, 1997

I extend a hearty welcome to all of you to this important meeting of the Party's National Executive which is being held at an extraordinary juncture in the country's political history. A tumultuous year is coming to a close. A new year of triumph is about to begin.

Atalji will head the Government in March

The BJP did not script the collapse of the two United Front governments in 1997. But, it certainly will be the author of an altogether new chapter in Indian politics. Come March, and India will have a BJP-led government headed by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

In ordinary course, a new National Executive and a new team of office bearers under a new President ought to have been in place by now. All the state units, barring a few, have completed their organisational elections. As per the schedule, the Party was to have concluded its Plenary Session at Kanpur in November, where I was to have passed on the Presidential baton to my successor.

But in anticipation – and, later, the certainty – of a mid-term election to the Lok Sabha, the Party's office bearers decided to defer the presidential election and asked me to continue in office till the crucial battle of hustings was over. I am grateful to the Party for the confidence it has reposed in me.

Events vindicate our correct analysis

At the last meeting of the National Executive held in New Delhi on 26-27 July, we had predicted that, "The final countdown of the

Gujral government has begun". Elaborating, we had said, "During the past three-and-a-half months, Prime Minister, Shri IK Gujral, has fully lived up to our prognosis that the length of his tenure would be directly proportional to his capacity to suffer insults to himself and to his office. Not a day passes without the Prime Minister making a laughing stock of himself and bringing disrepute to India in the eyes of the world."

The emergence of gutless and mandateless Prime Ministers, whose entry on the stage of national governance is as surprising as their exit is inglorious, is, however, not a chance phenomenon. It is the inevitable outcome of the unnatural, negative and perverse politics which our adversaries have resorted to in recent years with the sole aim of keeping the BJP out.

Politics of Negativism

Politics of negativism distorts democracy. And when democracy is played by crooked rules, it unleashes power struggles and ego clashes whose denouement even its distorters cannot control after a certain point of time. Neither Shri Gujral nor Shri Sitaram Kesri wrote the script of the conspiracy which pulled down the second United Front government and necessitated mid-term elections. But being the prime beneficiaries of, and accomplices in, the larger conspiracy of keeping the BJP out, they simply could not escape the costly consequences of the politics of negativism.

Stable Government, Able Prime Minister

The ugly shenanigans of the leaders of the Congress – United Front combine have sharply focused two issues which will determine the direction and outcome of the election campaign: Stability of the government and Ability of the Prime Minister. On both counts, our Party stands head and shoulder above our adversaries.

In the words of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the BJP has a leader who is not merely the Party's choice but the nation's natural choice. He shone brightly even when the Congress and other parties had their own stars in the political firmament. Today, when our rival parties are led by pygmies, and are not even in a position to present their prime ministerial candidate, India's acceptance of Shri Atalji's leadership is a foregone conclusion.

Congress no Longer has the Stability Card

The BJP will be the natural choice of India on the count of stability, too. In my opening remarks at the July meeting of the National Executive, I had stated: “For decades, the Congress Party’s trump card in elections was the Stability Card. Since the formation of the Congress-backed UF government last year, a government whose tenure has been marked by perpetual instability and total uncertainty, the Stability Card has slipped out of the hands of the Congress party and has become lodged with the BJP.”

Subsequent developments have only reinforced the fundamental correctness of this analysis. The collapse of two UF governments in a span of 17 months has taken a huge economic, social, political and even constitutional toll. This has convinced every section of the population that governmental instability at the Centre is a luxury India simply cannot afford.

People Ready to Give BJP a Chance

Precisely for this reason, every section without exception will cast its support for that party and combination which is most likely to form a stable government. This, translated in the context of today’s ground reality of a disintegrating Congress and a discredited and divided UF, means support for the BJP and its allies.

Coupled with the factor of stability is another reason which will ensure a big groundswell of support for the BJP. It is the innate democratic consciousness of the Indian electorate which, transcending all the caste, religious and regional identities, today articulates itself in the minds and on the lips of most Indians thus: “In New Delhi, we have seen all other parties in power. This time, let us give the BJP a chance”.

The BJP will Replace the Congress as the Mainstream of Indian Politics

The twin reasons mentioned above have created an objective condition for the BJP to vastly expand its vote share beyond the 20% polled by us in the last two elections. Large sections of the Indian population – both geographically and socially – which were not the traditional supporters of our Party are today inclined to vote for us.

The traditional constituency of every single adversary of ours is cracking up. There is a rapid polarisation of political forces at the grassroots level, only a part of which has so far reflected itself at the top-level structures of our rival parties. Orissa, in whose capital we have today assembled for this important meeting, itself best symbolises the dramatic realignment of political forces now in the making in all parts of India. The worst hit in this pan-Indian reconfiguration of the voting preferences will be the Congress, Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party and even the two communist parties.

On a well-reasoned estimate, the resultant vote swing can augment the BJP's ballot share by anywhere between 5-10%. In other words, there is a pro-BJP wave waiting to be created. There is a new history waiting to be made. The unfolding situation contains a never-before opportunity for the BJP not only to win the election but also to replace the Congress as the mainstream of Indian politics. It is now entirely up to our subjective capabilities to convert this objective possibility into a firm reality.

Our Weaknesses and how to Overcome them

I have so far focused on our party's strengths and opportunities. But no analysis can be complete without an assessment of the weaknesses of, and the threats before, the organisation concerned, as also an indication of the ways to overcome them. It is believed that our chief weakness lies in our inability so far to build our organisation and expand our political appeal in the Southern and Eastern states to that critical level where vote shares convert themselves into electoral victories.

Increasing Support in Southern States

Although such is the general perception, we should bear in mind that our prospects in the coming elections are bright even in Southern and Eastern states. I say this on the strength of two factors. One, the stability factor will weigh on the minds of voters all across the country and this will naturally help our candidates in non-traditional constituencies, too. Two, the tremendous response to the *Swarna Jayanti Rath Yatra* in the Southern and Eastern states, at a time when election was nowhere in sight, convinced me that the BJP is well on its way to overcoming the geographical disability it

has suffered from so far. Besides, new alliances with regional partners are likely in many of these states.

On the eve of this important meeting at Bhubaneswar, a significant new alliance has taken shape in Tamil Nadu – our alliance with the AIADMK. For the Congress Party, this has been a staggering blow. The rank and file of the BJP always remember with a sense of gratitude the stolid support which the AIADMK leader and the then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha, had given to the BJP's stand on Ayodhya when, at a meeting of the National Integration Council, all others had mounted a vicious assault on us.

I, therefore, feel reasonably convinced that the BJP will not only open its account in all these States, but could even pull off big surprises in states like Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Suitable Candidates

The challenge we face as we ready for the electoral battle is two-fold. First, we face the challenge of completing the exercise of candidate selection smoothly and cohesively. In this regard, I would strongly urge every Party colleague to exert his utmost to ensure that we succeed in this task. My confidence that we will succeed in this task is based on the remarkable smoothness with which our organisational elections have been conducted in almost all the States.

Mobilising Voters

The second challenge we face in the coming election is from our adversaries. Driven to despair by the certainty of the BJP's and its allies' victory, our adversaries can be expected to go to any lengths to create problems for us during the campaign and on the polling day. We must foil all these likely designs with a fail-proof organisational plan. Particularly challenging for us will be the task of mobilising maximum voter turnout on the polling day.

Let us Infuse Positive Programmatic Content in our Promise of Stability

Election 1998 is not going to be an ordinary election. It will change the content and the contours of Indian politics for decades to come. For the first time since Independence, a party wedded to

the ideals of unalloyed nationalism is poised to take the reins of power at the Centre – not for 13 days as in May 1996 but for full five years. But as we have pledged to ourselves time and again, power is not an end in itself for the BJP. Rather, it is a necessary instrument to make a difference – to make a positive difference in governance, and through it in the economy, society, institutions and in India's global standing.

Create a Pro-BJP Wave

In order to make a positive difference in governance, we must begin by pitching our campaign itself on a firm positive footing. We must aim at creating a pro-BJP wave not only on the basis of a negative vote – the disgraceful conduct of the Congress-UF which has thrust a costly and unnecessary mid-term election on the nation – but also on a persuasive positive vote. We should not focus only, or even chiefly, on the misdeeds and the misrule of the Congress and the UF. The people already are aware of this aspect. And it is this awareness which has predisposed them to give the BJP a chance this time.

Projecting Positive Programmes

What the voter will be keen on knowing during the campaign is what the BJP is going to do once in power. Hence, the importance of issues and policies and programmes will be vastly higher in this election. In other words, while stability is a trump card which we already have in our hands, we will be called upon to put positive programmatic content in the concept of stability.

Our simple explanatory theme should be: Stability is a pre-condition for good governance. And good governance – based on the four principles of *Shuchita* (probity in public life), *Suraksha* (security for the country and the common man), *Samarasata* (social harmony) and *Swadeshi* (economic nationalism) – is a pre-condition for making India a strong, prosperous and confident nation occupying her rightful place in the comity of nations.

We are Not Status Quoists

The BJP is interested in stability not just for the sake stability. After all, India has seen Congress governments of

enjoying brute majority in Parliament and yet taking the nation along the path of corruption, criminalisation, casteism and communalism. What the BJP wants and promises, is dynamic, goal oriented stability. Here, then, is a challenge before us to demonstrate to ourselves and to the nation that we are not status-quoists but change-agents who view stability as an opportunity and a prerequisite for nation-building.

Recalling Deendayalji's words of wise guidance

This challenge naturally increases the relevance and usefulness of the Manifesto. Generally, in the elections so far, preparation of the manifesto is seen as a ritual and its contents are glossed over or totally ignored in the campaign. The BJP is uniquely placed to change this unfortunate reality and place Election 1998 on a firm, positive and issue-based footing. The educative and participative value of the coming election will be far higher than that of many elections in the past. Naturally, this will increase the responsibility of the Party once it comes to power.

A Blend of Ideals and Realism

Our approach to formulating the Party's policies and promises should be guided by a good blend of ideals and realism. In this context, it is instructive to recall what Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay wrote in his classic essay 'Your Vote' in December 1961, just before the Parliamentary election in 1962. The essay, written at a time when the BJP was occupying a marginal place in Indian politics, merits serious reading even today in order to refresh our own understanding of why we are in politics, what is the significance of elections in a democracy, what should be the standards of behaviour of political leaders and what principles should govern the framing of our policies and programmes.

Pandit Deendayalji wrote: "The (third) quality of a good party is that it should be wedded to certain ideals and all its policies should be framed with a view to realising these ideals. It is true that the very practical act of administration cannot be fitted into a set of formulae frame on a theoretical analysis of the situation. But expediency and opportunism should not pass for realism. Realism

is a virtue of the idealist, the principled man, the missionary; it is not a characteristic of the man with an easy conscience, the opportunist and the apostate. Political parties and their leaders by their behaviour determine the values of political life. They set the norms. Naturally, their policies should in no case violate these norms of public behaviour. Democracy is not simply elections. It requires a well-organised people, well-built parties and well-established conventions of political behaviour.

Realistic Programme

“A good party with a set of good candidates must also have a good, realistic programme. It is after all the programme that will require to be implemented. Good people with a bad programme or an impractical programme will not help alleviate the sufferings of the people. On the contrary, they will create more difficulties.”

Some Directions for our Manifesto and Campaign

The Manifesto Committee and the Campaign Committee which will be constituted in this meeting of the National Executive will, of course, get cracking soon. But I would like to place before colleagues here some broad guidelines for discussion and direction.

1. Good Governance –

Let us present a comprehensive case for good governance and the imperatives involved in achieving it. The chief among these imperatives is the approach of national consensus on as many national issues as possible.

We should not hesitate to tell the people that the problems facing the nation are very complex and do not lend themselves to easy solutions by any government. On the basis of this stark truth, we should appeal to the people and to other parties for a high level of partnership and participation in nation-building.

2. Electoral Reforms –

Let us state our commitment to carry out far reaching political and electoral reforms in order to institutionalise stable and good governance.

3. Attention to Basic Needs of the People –

Economic and developmental issues are exercising all sections of our society. They constitute a critical area where the performance of any government is ultimately judged. As the natural Party of governance, the BJP is called upon to create confidence among the people, that we attach utmost importance to these issues and also have a definite set of policies and programmes to meet their rising expectations.

Unfortunately, much of the media and political debate on economic policy in our country – indeed, in the entire world – has got straitjacketed along the polemical lines of ‘centralisation or open markets’, ‘indigenous industry or multinationals’, etc. I do not in the least argue that this debate is irrelevant or useless. Our own party has very clear views on them. But, in a country like India, the primary concern of economic policy must be the fulfilment of the basic needs of our poor and disadvantaged brethren. India’s political parties ought to be concerned about issues like education, health, safe drinking water, housing, child and maternal welfare and the care of the aged and the disabled.

4. A Vision of Our Great Future –

Our manifesto must fully reflect our unwavering commitment to these issues – not in broad generalities but in specific, result-oriented, inspirational and mobilisational terms. I would, by way of an illustration, even suggest that we have a separate and substantial section on ‘Children’. They are not our voters, but any investment we make in them – and this investment could be of financial, intellectual, cultural or emotional resources – will be an investment in India’s future. And as the BJP gets ready to rule India into the 21st century, the vision that should drive us cannot be anything less than the vision of our great future – greater, as Deendayalji used to say, than even our great past.

Restructuring Centre-State relations, decentralisation of powers at all levels and pro-people administrative reforms should be a firm commitment in our manifesto. Not only is

this a core belief of the BJP, but it also has a strong appeal for all the regional parties.

5. Social Justice –

The prospect of becoming the country's mainstream political party places an inescapable responsibility on our manifesto to mirror the concerns and aspirations of every section of Indian society – especially dalits, tribals backward classes and other weaker sections of society. Our Party unequivocally champions the cause of every section of our national family having its due share in *satta* (power), *sampatti* (prosperity) and *sammaan* (social status). These concerns have always been central to the BJP's philosophy. But at no time in the past was the situation so supportive as now for us to expose the limitations of our adversaries' advocacy of social justice and to advance our own superior and more sincere espousal of the same noble concept on the basis of *samajik samarasata*.

6. Attention Minorities –

Our list of candidates should fairly reflect the social composition of Indian society. We should make added efforts to identify deserving and winnable candidates from among religious minorities, especially Muslims. The changing mood of Muslim voters towards the BJP is, perhaps, the most important sociological feature of Election 1998.

7. Reservation for Women –

Our firm commitment on 33% reservation for women also places an obligation to increase the number of women in our candidates' list.

We are About to Create History

Our victory is certain. But let us understand the historical significance of the victory to be won. It will be a triumph of not just another political party in yet another Parliamentary poll. No, it will be a triumph of our ideology and ideals of nationalism. It will mean reassertion of the nation's *chiti* (soul) in the sphere of politics and governance. With it will come the challenge of reharmonising the relationship between the various institutions of the nation – in other

words, the challenge of good governance – which alone can help India to march along her predestined path of glory.

We are about to create history this time. Our long decades of *tapasya* now promise to bear fruit. Of course, the fruit will not come of its own. We will have to strive hard for it, and there is no room for complacency. The more so since our failed and frustrated opponents will not let go of power so easily. But the prospect of power should not make us forget our *tapasya* itself. For us, power is a means to serve Mother India, nothing more. Hence, for us governance is simply a continuation of our ceaseless service of *Bharatmata*. In the results of our service, and in the act of service itself, will we find the true fruit of *tapasya*.

Vande Mataram!

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National Executive

New Delhi

22 February, 1996

I welcome you all to this meeting of the BJP's National Executive. Our last meeting was held immediately after the conclusion of Parliament's Winter Session, on 23 and 24 December, 1995.

The two months' interlude between that meeting and this one has been crowded with a series of stunning events, some of which would be having a deep and lasting impact on the country's politics.

Breach of National Security

Let me recapitulate four principal happenings of this period.

1. The Purulia arms dropping incident was a shocking revelation for the nation. It highlighted how totally insecure our country's frontiers and air space have become under the present regime. The government till date has been unable to explain how the country's security was breached.

While the Purulia arms dropping continues to be an unresolved mystery, this week a second cache of arms sent from Pakistan has been seized in Delhi. These happenings clearly show that there is a sinister ISI design to create widespread mischief across India. The very fact that Pakistan has been sending such huge caches of arms to our country with such ease is disquieting. The nation's security has never been so gravely imperilled as it is today.

Hawala Assault on BJP

2. On 16 January, the government filed a chargesheet in the Hawala case against several political leaders including the BJP President. The case has been with the government for five years now and despite persistent prodding by the Supreme Court nothing had been happening. I regard this Hawala assault on the BJP as a besieged Prime Minister's last desperate gamble. The motivations of this decision are patent: to blunt the edge of BJP's crusade against the Rao government's corruption. The message sought to be conveyed to the people is: Well, if we are corrupt, so are our principal adversaries.

The Move has Boomeranged

The Rao government, however, had not bargained for the BJP's powerful and principled response to this Hawala gambit. The Party's decision to let its President quit Parliament on the issue, and to let him declare that he would not contest until he was absolved of the charge has triggered off a chain of events that can only spell doom for the Congress Party. At the moment, the entire Congress edifice seems to be tumbling down like a pack of cards. The move against the BJP has badly boomeranged. From the people's point of view, the Congress Party is in the grip of a death wish.

High Court Indictment of Mulayam Singh

3. The most significant judicial pronouncement since the Executive last met has been the Allahabad High Court's severe indictment of the Mulayam Singh government for the terror it had unleashed on Uttaranchal activists on 2 October, 1994. Peaceful activists on their way to attend a rally in New Delhi to press their demand for a separate Hill State of Uttaranchal were stopped at Muzaffarnagar. What followed was in keeping with Shri Mulayam Singh's style of governance. Activists were shot dead by police in cold blood, women were dragged into the fields and gangraped, and scores suffered permanent disabilities.

The BJP welcomes the High Court's verdict, holding Shri Yadav's administration guilty of committing gross abuse of human rights, and awarding compensation to the victims as well as reparation for the Uttaranchal region. The guilty officials should be punished without any delay. We feel that Shri Yadav, too, is guilty because as head of the then State Government, he cannot disclaim responsibility. He should be penalized on two counts – first, for initially denying the veracity of the atrocities and describing them as baseless allegations; and second, for later disassociating himself from the actions of his officials. His conduct is in conspicuous contrast to what Shri Kalyan Singh did *vis-à-vis* his officials following the 6 December happenings in Ayodhya.

The BJP stands committed to the creation of Uttaranchal. The first step taken towards this end in the form of the resolution adopted during Shri Kalyan Singh's Chief Ministership will be taken to its logical conclusion by a BJP government at the Centre.

The Fodder Scam

4. In Bihar, thanks to the exertions of our party's state unit, a stinking scandal has been brought to light exposing how the Laloo Yadav government there has been looting the State over the past five years. In what has come to be known as the 'Fodder Scam', hundreds of crores of rupees were misappropriated from the Animal Husbandry Department. Similarly, hundreds of crores were misappropriated from funds allocated for education and the PWD. Our investigations have exposed how these frauds were used by the Janata Dal to influence the outcome of the State Assembly elections in favour of the Janata Dal and benefit certain luminaries of the Party.

Corruption on Top of the Agenda

Last year, we had identified *Suraksha* (Security), *Shuchita* (Probity), *Samarasata* (Social harmony) and *Swadeshi* (Self-

reliance) as core issues likely to affect people's verdict in the forthcoming elections. Recent happenings have only fortified our appraisal.

Generally speaking, the Congress has in the past succeeded in sweeping the corruption issue beneath the carpet by dismissing it as a global phenomenon. Only in 1989, because of Bofors, corruption became the principal issue which determined that year's verdict. The Rao government must be thanked for bringing the issue to the top of this year's poll agenda by launching the Hawala prosecutions on election eve.

Country Yearning for a Change

In 1946, the interim government headed by Pt. Nehru was formed. This year marks the completion of fifty years since then. Barring four years, it is the Congress that has ruled New Delhi for this half-century. Its performance record is dismal. The country is yearning for a change.

Dilli Chalo

This is the birth centenary year of that great leader of our freedom movement, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. On 25 August, 1943, the day Netaji formally assumed command of the Indian National Army, he remarked:

"With the slogan 'Onwards to Delhi' (*Dilli Chalo*) on our lips, let us continue to labour and fight till our national flag flies over the Viceroy's House in New Delhi."

'*Dilli Chalo*' became an inspiring slogan for all patriots. '*Dilli Chalo*' at that time was a slogan aimed at *Swaraj* (Self-Government). Though we have had *Swaraj* for half century, *Suraj* (Good Government) has been eluding us. Let the BJP become an instrument to usher in *Suraj*.

In the month of March, shortly after the Holi Festival, I propose to undertake a month-long '*Dilli Chalo Rath Yatra*, from *Swaraj* to *Suraj*, taking the BJP's message of *Suraksha*, *Shuchita*, *Samarasata* and *Swadeshi*, and its ideology of cultural nationalism (*Hindutva*) to all parts of the country.

Value Based Governance

In Chinese script, the word 'crisis' is written as a compound of two characters, one denoting 'danger' and the other 'opportunity'.

Today, the BJP is viewed in the country as a political force resolved to restore to Indian politics the ethical base which Gandhiji, Deendayalji and Jaiprakashji sought to give it by their endeavours. The latest assault mounted by the establishment on the BJP is intended to damage this popular perception. It is up to us to convert this challenge into a unique opportunity.

Our struggle is not just for a change of government; it is for a change in governance, a change in the value-system which informs governance.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Bhopal

21 June, 1996

BJP is the Single Largest Party

At the Plenary Session of the BJP in Mumbai six months ago, the party had predicted: "India is destined to make her entry into the 21st century under the leadership of powerful nationalist forces that are surfacing at every level in this great nation of a billion people. It is the historic task of the Bharatiya Janata Party to rise to the occasion as the focus of these forces and gently guide India towards the glorious destiny that awaits her."

In the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP outbeat all its opponents to become the largest single Party in the Lok Sabha. Looking at the party-wise break-up of women MPs, we feel gratified to find that the BJP with 14 MPs heads the tally. There are in all 120 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Here too, the BJP with 42 SC and ST MPs heads the party-wise list. This remarkable success is the party's first firm step taken towards discharging its 'historic task'.

Be Prepared for the Next Round

It is obvious, however, that the severely fractured nature of the Eleventh Lok Sabha makes yet another early Lok Sabha election inevitable. Ordinarily, the next Lok Sabha election would have been due in the year 2001 AD. But as things stand, all BJP units must remain alert to the possibility of the 12th general elections taking place much earlier, most probably in 1997 itself. And that would be BJP's real big opportunity to make our Mumbai prognosis about gently guiding India "towards the glorious destiny that awaits her" in the twenty-first century literally come true!

The Congress has lost the Lok Sabha elections twice earlier also – first in 1977, and then again in 1989. But this time it has struck its nadir.

The focus of public attention naturally being on the parliamentary elections, it has been generally overlooked that in 1996 the Congress Party lost not only its government in New Delhi, but simultaneously also its governments in Assam, Kerala, and Haryana. The Congress Party's ally, the AIADMK, has been dislodged from the office in Tamil Nadu.

Corruption Spelled Congress Party's Doom

While a number of issues have contributed to the Congress' steep fall in public esteem, there is little doubt that corruption is the principal factor responsible for Congress' ignominious debacle. Honesty and integrity in the administration is the first and foremost ingredient of good governance-'*su-raj*'.

Against this background, it was somewhat surprising to find UF Prime Minister, Shri Deve Gowda, labouring hard in the Parliament to play down the gravity of this malignant malady, that is, corruption. There is a feeling among many top politicians – and the present PM is obviously one of them – that corruption does not really concern the common man. These politicians are absolutely wrong.

The average Indian feels the pinch of corruption everywhere he goes. He feels it when he pays money to get his child admitted to school. He feels it when he must pay touts at the railway station somehow to get a berth. He feels it when he goes to apply for a telephone. He feels it when he is admitted to hospital. He feels it when he is cheated at the ration shop giving good money for a mixture of grain and gravel!

This situation must change. And it can change. But in the matter of probity in public life and in the government, the cleansing has to start from the top. If senior politicians continue to indulge in scams and scandals with impunity, there is no hope for the common man.

Shri Deve Gowda unabashedly declared in the Parliament that tackling corruption was no priority for his government. By this declaration, he only strengthened the suspicion that Congress support to the UF Government had been procured at a heavy price: the price being as much immunity and protection as the Executive

can offer in so far as the corruption of the Rao government was concerned!

Congress Support to Deve Gowda – A Protection Racket

The Congress supported UF government is, thus, more a Protection Racket than a proper governing outfit!

When Parliament was debating the UF government's confidence motion, the Treasury Benches cheered wildly when Shri PV Narasimha Rao thundered: "My understanding with Deve Gowdaji is that this party will not allow that government to fall under any circumstances. History will not say that it was because of the Congress Party the Deve Gowda's government fell."

And yet, mark the turn about that has come within just eight days of this unqualified, unequivocal assurance. Addressing Congress Party workers in his own constituency of Behrampur (Orissa) on 19 June, Shri Rao warned the UF government not to take Congress support for granted. "Ours is not a blind support", the Congress President said, and added: "If it (UF government) committed grave mistakes which went against the basic principles of the Congress, we will be forced to reconsider our support to government."

One really wonders whether the steps taken by the CBI in the past couple of days with regard to the Urea Scam have anything to do with the Behrampur outburst!

Selective Acceptance of Supreme Court Verdicts

One welcome aspect of the recent parliamentary discussions on the two confidence motions – one initiated by Shri AB Vajpayee and the other by Shri HD Deve Gowda – is that it has triggered off a national debate on secularism.

I am happy that for once Shri PV Narasimha Rao also broke his normal *maun* and spoke at some length on the question of secularism.

Shri Rao mentioned the Supreme Court's verdict on the administration of Hindu Temples, which permits the government to intervene in certain aspects of temple management. The Congress President held this up as an example of Indian secularism.

Well, I do not think any one has taken exception to this particular decision. But I am amazed that while a Supreme Court judgement on Hindu temples is approvingly referred to by Shri Rao.

Repeated pronouncements of the Supreme Court, admonishing successive Congress governments for disregarding the Constitutional mandate for a Uniform Civil Code, are not just glossed over, Shri Rao has had the temerity to cite BJP's advocacy of such a code as evidence of its non-secular character!

In fact, compressed to essentials, the only two aspects of BJP's manifesto dealt with by Shri Rao in his speech to substantiate why a secular party like his was "diametrically opposed" to the BJP were:

1. BJP advocates a Uniform Civil Code; and
2. BJP wants Article 370 to be scrapped.

Well, BJP is committed to both these issues. We hold that opposition to these issues is pure vote-bank politics, and we challenge our adversaries for a national debate on these issues.

Uniform Civil Code

In a recently published brochure, *Uniform Civil Code for India*, veteran jurist and author of the 18-column commentary on the Indian Constitution, Shri Durga Das Basu has said:

"The question whether India should adopt a uniform (or common) civil code is a legal question because it is a mandate addressed to the 'State' by Article 44 of the Constitution – which is the highest law of the land.

"Unfortunately, however, in India, legal questions are often politicised and thereby confused, particularly when the issue relates to the election prospects of each political party and, particularly, when it affects the Muslim vote bank on which most of the Parties have to rely.

"For the same reason, even an academician who writes on such Constitutional provisions has the risk of being dubbed a 'communalist' by interested politicians. A crucial instance of this sort is the topic of a Uniform Civil Code."

BJP will Fill up the Vacuum

In a recent article (Indian Express, 14.6.1996) analyzing the Congress Party's performance in the General Elections, Congress leader, Shri Mani Shankar Aiyer, while pointing out that the BJP's gains have been exclusively "from the Hindu heartland and western India" has observed:

"The number of its seats is, indeed, impressive. More impressive still is the phenomenal rise in the number of seats from

two in 1984 to 160 in just 12 years later, and as many as the Congress could muster in 1989 if we take the seats of the BJP and its allies together.

“The possibility of the Sangh Parivar going over the top to a majority of its own in the next elections, whenever these are held, must be reckoned with by every political party, including my own.” BJP’s growth during the last one decade has, no doubt, been phenomenal. But it needs to be appreciated that the Congress Party is in a state of terminal decline. It is undergoing rapid erosion. And the BJP’s growth rate is perhaps not able to match Congress’ decline rate.

The BJP’s battle cry for the coming months and years has to be: “Let’s expand rapidly into new geographical and social bases and fill up the vacuum being created by Congress’ disintegration.

The Party’s organisational machinery needs to be adequately geared up for the challenges ahead. The situation today is extremely favourable for the BJP. Our 13-day stint in office has served as a sort of well-produced, ably-crafted teaser trailer which has left the audiences yearning to see the full feature film. The nation wants to see Shri Vajpayee as Prime Minister again and would like his government to rule for a full term.

Three Fold Task Ahead

The full potential of this favourable situation can be realised only if unity, determination and discipline are restored at all levels of the party organisation.

The task before this meeting of the National Executive is mainly three fold:

1. To analyse the poll results and draw the necessary lessons;
2. To take stock of the post-election political developments and evaluate how these have affected the party; and
3. To plan and prepare for the impending UP Assembly elections.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Jaipur

15 November, 1996

I welcome you all to this important meeting of the Party's National Executive here in Jaipur.

Every National Executive meet of the Party is significant in its own way. But the one that has just begun is invested with special importance on two counts. Since we last met in Bhopal on 21-23 June, events and developments of great importance impinging on the vital interests of both the nation and our Party have taken place. Here in Jaipur, we are called upon to fashion a firm and principled response to both the external political situation as well as the internal organisational health of the Party.

Government Lacks in Direction

At the time of our Bhopal meeting, the government of Shri HD Deve Gowda was barely a fortnight old. During the five months since then, our assessment of this government has been proved right to a degree that really amazes us. Never in the history of independent India have we had a government that is so singularly lacking in direction and cohesion, not to speak of a genuine democratic mandate.

We have a Prime Minister who belongs to a party that has 45 members in Parliament. That party is headed by the Chief Minister of Bihar who is battling for survival after having masterminded the country's most inventive scandal yet to defraud his own government of hundreds of crores of rupees.

The ruling outfit is called the United Front, but it is anything but united. The Prime Minister announced his government's resolve

to form a separate Uttarakhand State and the Left Front within the United Front pounced on him for it. The Prime Minister, during his recent visit to Assam, said his government would repeal the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act, 1983, and the Left parties have once again taken him to task for it.

Supreme Court Directive Not Heeded

The Supreme Court had directed the Union Government to file before August an affidavit regarding the efforts made by it to enact a Uniform Civil Code in the country. What the government did file invited the apex court's displeasure, because all it reiterated in the report was its intention not to enact a Uniform Civil Code, now or ever. Ironically, this report has been prepared by the law ministry headed by Shri Ramakant Khalap, whose own state, Goa, has had a Uniform Civil Code since Independence without any protests or problems. Many more examples can be given to show how confused, incoherent and internally divided Shri Deve Gowda's government is.

Perilous State of Economy

The country's economy is in a perilous state. Not one of the responsible ministers is willing to tell the truth—India is at the beginning of a recession. A steep fall in the rate of growth of exports has led to a trade deficit of US \$ 3 billion in the last 12 months, which is projected to balloon to US \$6 billion for the year 1996-97. Our hard currency reserves have fallen from US \$ 19.4 billion last year to \$18.3 billion today, giving rise to apprehensions of a looming balance of payments crisis. The government will say that recession, like corruption, is a 'global phenomenon'. That simply isn't true. The Chinese economy saw hard-currency reserves rise from \$67 billion to over \$90 billion in the same 12 months.

But let me focus on those 'achievements' that directly affect the common man. The price of coal has risen by 2896 with 8% of that rise coming in October alone. The price of fuel has risen by 30% since July. The price of diesel has risen by 25%. Freight and railway charges have gone up by 10%.

None of this will affect our 'humble farmer' Prime Minister who says he can afford to pay airfare for taking 15 family members

to Africa! But it certainly affects the working man who finds his bus ticket has doubled in price.

Out of Tune with Realities

Yet, we have an ebullient and unworried Finance Minister who, citing the example of some super-rich youngsters having spent Rs. 5,000 to buy a ticket for the Michael Jackson show in Mumbai, claims: "Look Indians have a lot of money with them. I would like to see them spend more and more." How cruel it must sound to a slum-dweller who has to worry about paying for his children's tuition fees or a poor village farmer who has no money to provide even basic medical care for his ailing child!

The 13-Party Blunder

Those who derided Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government in May as a 13-day wonder can no longer hide the fact that what passes for government at the Centre today is, from the point of view of the country's vital interests, a costly 13-party blunder. The experience of the past five months makes it crystal clear; the country must rid itself of this farce called the United Front government at the earliest.

The rickety structure of this government is supported by two props—one, the Congress, which is outside the United Front, and the other, CPI(M), which is inside the United Front. Both are lashing out at the government's performance. We cannot, of course, take their criticism at face value because the leaders of these two parties are interested in two things at the same time – back-seat driving in the government as well as criticising its functioning for public consumption. They are worried that the opposition space has been totally monopolised by the BJP. Thus, they want to have the cake and eat it too.

Internal Contradictions and Compulsions

But in the process, the internal contradictions and compulsions within the United Front and the Congress are ripening with each passing day. At the moment, the UF and the Congress are both engaged in executing their predatory designs against each other. The UF wants to break the Congress by luring away Congressmen by dangling plums of ministerial office before them. The Congress'

game plan, on the other hand, is to take away the Tiwari Congress, the Tamil Manila Congress and other former Congressmen like Shri S. Bangarappa from the UF fold, and then withdraw support to the Deve Gowda government. The coming months will witness intense flux and instability at the Centre. Our Party must remain vigilant and prepared to face any situation.

Protection Racket

In my opening remarks at Bhopal, I had referred to Prime Minister Shri Deve Gowda's labouring hard in Parliament to play down the gravity of the malignant malady called corruption. Shri Deve Gowda had unabashedly declared in Parliament that tackling corruption was no priority for his government. By this declaration, he only strengthened the suspicion that the Congress support to the UF government had been procured at a heavy price – the price being as much immunity and protection as the Executive can offer insofar as the corruption of the previous Rao government was concerned. The Congress supported UF government is, thus, more a Protection Racket than a proper governing outfit.

How smugly the description fits. Not a day passes without members of the Rao government making the headlines either with the exposure of a new corruption scandal or with the judiciary administering a slap on its face at every turn in the investigation of its known mega-scandals. Also, not a day passes without the government of Deve Gowda trying – in ways that do not always get exposed in the media – to protect Rao and his corrupt colleagues. But this protection racket will not work; it must not be allowed to work.

A section of the judiciary is playing a commendable role in frustrating the ploys of this protection racket by turning the heat on the executive for its malign acts of commission and omission. In the process, some excesses may have been committed. But it needs to be appreciated that the current phase of judicial activism has its roots in executive inertia. So, the sweeping criticism of the judiciary's role voiced these days in some quarters is not justified. However, the BJP also must step up its own independent political action among the masses to mobilise a powerful crusade against corruption.

Dubious Role of Communist Parties

As part of our ideological offensive, we must launch a sustained campaign against the double-facedness, the naked hypocrisy and the rank opportunism of the two communist parties, who today are the principal mentors of the United Front.

Communist hypocrisy has been laid bare by their vocal support to the misuse of Article 356 of the Constitution both in Gujarat and UP. Just a day before this Article was fraudulently invoked in UP, Shri Jyoti Basu was heard denouncing the provision and pleading for its abrogation. This hypocrisy was also on display in their so-called '*Bihar Bachao*' rally in Patna on 7 November. In all their self-righteous humbug about fighting corruption and defending the country's interests, the leaders of both the CPI(M) and its underling CPI did not even once mention the name of Laloo Prasad Yadav, with whom these worthies had shared the platform in last year's '*Garib Rally*'. How can they target Laloo, who is still the President of the principal component of the United Front, without causing the entire tent of this *tamasha* called the UF government to come crashing down?

The truth of the matter is, our communists say they are interested in saving Bihar, but they are really saving Laloo. And they are saving Laloo in order to save their own fast-eroding relevance in Indian politics.

How ridiculous, indeed, do these dinosaurs of Indian politics get in their efforts to hide their own obsolescence! Our communists here, who for seven long decades used to dutifully hold aloft the umbrella whenever it rained in their Fatherland, were celebrating at the same rally in Pant the 79th anniversary of the 'Great' Russian Revolution, which even the Russians have now put behind them.

Communists Become the Brain Behind the Government

Considering their declining strength, the two communist parties do not ordinarily deserve any great attention. But an alarming situation is developing in national politics. These communists who called India's Independence in 1947 '*sham independence*', who supported India's partition and projected the Soviet Union to be the ideal model of national integration until its sudden implosion in the early '90s, who still revere Lenin and Stalin but do not give the same

status to Gandhi or Subhash Chandra Bose or Jayprakash Narayan or any of the other towering Indian figures, have today become the brain behind the ruling establishment in India. Since history (not only Indian history but world history) has disrobed them of all pieces of their ideological attire – be it anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, dictatorship of the proletariat and other such absurdities – they have now invented anti-BJPism as the last and the only flyleaf to hide their irrelevance. The recent spurt in Marxist violence against BJP, RSS and ABVP cadres in Kerala is also a manifestation of their pique.

Ironically, however, their proximity to power and opinion making structures has increased to a level that is totally disproportionate to their stagnant or shrinking electoral base. In such a situation, it is the duty of a nationalistic Party like the BJP to wage a powerful and relentless ideological battle against the pernicious influence of the communists.

The most pernicious communist influence on Indian polity is today manifest in the way the BJP is sought to be isolated in the name of fighting communalism. The communists and their opportunistic allies are prepared to go to any length – I repeat, to any length – in their bid to grab and retain power. They'll do so even if, in the process, the letter and the spirit of the Constitution have to be subverted, even if all the established norms and conventions have to be thrown to the winds, and even if the BJP has to be as good as illegally gagged out of existence. We have seen the most brazen examples of this obsessive anti-BJPism in Gujarat and UP. The UF Steering Committee has even formally resolved that it will continue President's Rule in UP till a 'secular' government is formed! This is nothing short of a *de facto* ban on the BJP.

Anti-BJP Ganging up Should Not Worry Us

Many political commentators, and often some of our own supporters, interpret our opponents' attempts to isolate the BJP as a serious threat for us. They also conclude that we have reached a saturation point in our growth profile or even that we have suffered major setbacks. A cool, dispassionate analysis of facts shows that, quite on the contrary, the BJP is the natural and the principal beneficiary of the new political dynamism that has come into being in India after the collapse of the Janata Party government in the late

1970s. We must, no doubt, be thoroughly unsparing and objective in our self-critical analysis of the developments in Gujarat and UP and learn the right lessons. But this anti-BJP ganging up need not worry us.

Let us turn to recent history and see how we have grown, both electorally and in terms of setting the ideological agenda for the nation. The birth of the BJP has its roots in the anti-*Hindutva* (disguised as anti-RSS) stance of the Janata Party, from which we were ungratefully ejected. Until then, and even later until 1989 in a different mode, anti-Congressism was the main factor influencing changes in the dynamics of the party system. But during the BJP's 16 years of existence, our Party has, slowly and steadily until 1989, but rapidly thereafter, changed the discourse as well as the dynamics of Indian politics. It is no longer anti-Congressism, but anti-BJPism, which is driving the alignment and re-alignment of parties. The 1996 Lok Sabha election was indeed a watershed in this dynamics.

Phenomenal Growth of BJP

But which party has grown as a result of political dynamics? Let us take a comparative look at the legislative strengths of the five major national parties during the 10-year period since 1986. In 1986, the number of Congress MLAs in all the states put together was 1874. Today it has dropped down to 1083. The legislative strength of the CPI(M) has gone down slightly while that of the CPI and Janata Dal shows a marginal rise. It is only the BJP, which has registered a phenomenal growth in this period – from 201 to 714.

The significance of the above figures lies in the fact that, of these five parties, only the BJP and the Congress are truly national parties. The Janata Dal is presently on the verge of disintegration. And of the two national parties, the Congress' legislative strength has, during the ten-year period of 1986-1996, fallen by 42.2%, whereas that of the BJP has gone up by 250.2%. This relative decline-growth pattern of the two principal national parties is further reinforced by a comparison of the parliamentary strengths of the two parties in the same period. In 1986, the Congress had 415 members in Parliament. Today it has only 146. Ten years ago, our strength in the Lok Sabha was 2; today it is 161.

Increasing Support from the People

Therefore, all this systematically orchestrated propaganda that the BJP has these days suffered a setback is totally spurious. We must debunk this kind of protection because it is factually untrue. Indeed, let us understand that the more our adversaries try to isolate us, the more and faster we will grow. The more brazenly the UF and the Congress subvert constitutional norms and democratic values in their bid to isolate us, the more spirited and widespread will be people's support to us. The more, the UF makes a mess of governance at the Centre—which it is doing already—the more surely will the people crave to bring back a BJP-led government headed by Shri Vajpayeeji. Hence, let us not worry too much about what our adversaries are doing to us.

Organisational Problems Must be Addressed

It often seems to me that the Bharatiya Janata Party today presents the picture of a lion caged by itself. It has all it takes to be crowned with the kingly status in Indian politics. Never in its 45 years of existence, first as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and later as the BJP, has the external environment been so conducive for our Party to firmly establish itself as the predominant political entity capable of ruling India with stability and a positive, far-sighted focus. Yet, if the promise sometimes seems elusive, it is owing largely to our problems within. And these problems are not of ideology, as some of our critics, even well-meaning critics, are prone to stress. The problems are organisational or behavioural.

Measured against the high standards the Party has set for itself—and these high standards are ordained by the Party's own ideology which sets it apart from others—we are duty-bound to address these organisational and behavioural issues, which we shall do with utmost seriousness in the months to come.

Challenging Task Ahead

In the months to come, as the BJP comes closer once again to heading a government at the Centre—whether through an early mid-term poll or otherwise—we will be called upon to provide Good Governance, which is both our promise to the people and a solemn

pledge to ourselves—indeed, our very *raison d'être*. Let us gear up the Party for this challenging task.

I have said earlier that we must vastly step up our independent political action among the masses to mobilise a powerful opinion against corruption. I think the time has come for us to devise specific measures and come to grips with this malignant malady which today afflicts and affects not only the political class but all sections of society. The absence of the fear of law, the faulty functioning of the legal and law-enforcement machinery and, above all, the systematic subversion of the rule of law by the executive itself have created a situation which spells disaster for Indian democracy.

Campaign Against Corruption

I call upon this National Executive to discuss and draw up a plan for a sustained nationwide campaign against corruption in high places. The campaign must focus on three things.

Transparency and Accountability

One, it must emphasise the imperative of institutionalizing maximum transparency and accountability in the governing structure, with minimum discretionary powers for ministers, senior bureaucrats, MPs and MLAs. Far-reaching administrative, political, legal reforms and decentralisation measures will be required to achieve this. Electoral reform, with special focus on public funding of elections, and measures to curb the generation of black money should be the two important planks in this regard.

Deterrent Punishment

Two, those who misuse their power for personal enrichment must face deterrent punishment both in the due process of law but, more importantly, also by firm internal action by the political party concerned. In other words, we must drastically reduce the incentive and simultaneously increase the disincentive, for people in political life to hanker after a place in the ministry, legislature or Parliament just because such a position becomes a passport for personal prosperity.

Fund Collection

Three, the BJP must evolve new norms insofar as fund collection for the Party is concerned. Every political party has legitimate expenses – and these expenses are constantly rising even if we take all the necessary measures of frugality. There is nothing wrong if parties receive donations, so long as both the collection and expenditure are transparently accounted for and regularly audited. Since we in politics are engaged in an honourable and socially essential activity, there is no reason for us to fudge accounts. Indeed, by doing so we set a wrong example for other sections of society, thereby weakening our own moral authority to provide the right leadership to society. To accomplish transparency in political donations, we need important reforms in tax laws, company laws and electoral laws.

Each of the three imperatives I have mentioned above in the context of a constructive campaign against corruption holds good not exclusively for party X or party Y but for the political class as a whole. The BJP must take the lead in initiating an all-party debate directed at concerted, timebound action to introduce these reforms. In this context, we are in the process of soon putting into effect a well-worked out, totally transparent system of mobilising funds for our Party both at the Centre and in the states.

Good Prospects for Further Growth of BJP

As for the talk about the BJP having reached a plateau in its mass support, let me just remind our opponents that we have heard it all before – indeed, as far back as in 1967, when the Jan Sangh scored its first major successes enabling it to become part of the SVD governments in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. Let no such comments bother us. Our own experience has shown that, only those organisations grow from strength to newer levels of strength who believe in themselves; who dream; who have the will, discipline and the determination to grow; who can draw sustenance from an inexhaustible source of ideology and idealism; and whose ideology is intrinsically aligned to the good of the nation and its people.

And the BJP is one such organisation. Else, it would not have become, as it has, a ray of hope in the otherwise very “gloomy and

depressing situation. It is an organisation of dreamers and doers which possesses the determination and self-confidence to grow. Inspired by titans like Dr. Hedgewar, Dr. Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, we have a rich tradition of idealism to draw upon. Let our ideology of *Hindutva* (Cultural Nationalism), *Swadeshi* (Economic Nationalism) and *Su-Raj* (Good Governance) guide us in our endeavour to grow further and serve this great land both in and out of power.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Panjim

2 April, 1995

For quite some time, representatives of Goa on the party's National Executive have been pressing us to hold a session of the Executive here in Goa. For some reason or the other, it had not been possible till now to avail of this invitation. I am happy that at long last, we are meeting in Panjim and enjoying the warm hospitality extended to us by the people of Goa. I welcome all members of the Executive and all the special invitees to this day session.

The timing of this Goa meeting is significant. It was, on 6 April, 1980 that the BJP was launched. This week, thus, the BJP will be exactly 15 years old.

There are two festival days during this week which, by a curious coincidence, have significance not only for the history of Christianity but for the BJP as well.

The infamous dual membership resolution conceived by Janata Party leaders in order to throw out former Jana Sangh members from the party was passed on 4 April, 1980, which happened to be a Good Friday. Next Friday this year also is Good Friday. According to Christian belief, this is the day on which Jesus Christ was crucified! The BJP was formally inaugurated two days after the adoption of the resolution, that is, on Easter Sunday, the day on which Christ is believed to have been resurrected. Next Sunday this year happens to be Easter Sunday!

Resurrection of *Hindutva* Ideology

Formation of the BJP way back in 1980 was truly the resurrection of an ideology – the *Hindutva* ideology – sought to be

smothered and snuffed out by the forces of casteism, communalism and pseudo secularism.

In the wake of the 6 December happenings at Ayodhya, these forces unleashed a State sponsored high voltage campaign of slander and calumny against our ideology and even went to the length of trying to outlaw it. The Religion Bill was a move in this direction.

When in the 1993 Assembly elections the BJP failed to perform as per expectations, these opponents of ours gleefully declared that the country had rejected *Hindutva*. They refused to recognise the hard reality that even though the BJP had lost control of UP, MP and Himachal governments, in terms of popular support, it was way ahead of its adversaries, and that in that round of Assembly polls it had secured one crore votes more than its main opponent, the Congress. The recent two rounds of Assembly elections, the first one in October-November last year and the second one in February-March, have, however, totally transformed the scene.

Political Map Has Been Redrawn

The political map of India has been variably redrawn. The BJP has reason to be proud of its showing. We are in power in the two foremost industrialised States of the country – in Gujarat on our own, and in Maharashtra in alliance with the Shiv Sena. We have firmly established the party in the South, and, relegating the Congress Party to the third position, become the recognised opposition in Karnataka. We have improved our strength in Orissa and retained our position in Bihar. We have opened our account in Manipur and more importantly in this beautiful State of Goa where our 4-member team has been functioning as a vigorous and vigilant opposition. In 1993 itself, we had won Rajasthan and Delhi.

But frankly, despite all this exhilarating news, there is no reason for any euphoria. The past few months have certainly given us laurels. But they have also cast on us a role that should make us humbler as well as sterner.

The BJP is, indeed, growing. But it is worrisome that the pace at which the Indian National Congress is collapsing is greater than the pace with which we are growing.

The Task is to keep the Nation Together

Dangerous forces are trying to fill the vacuum— forces of casteism, communalism and communism. Along with corruption, these desperate and disparate forces threaten our very existence and ethos. The question before us is no more being an alternative to the Congress Party. The BJP is today widely acknowledged as that. The task before the BJP is greater, because ours is the only Party which can provide the central force to bind India together. The task before us is not merely the victory in elections; the task is to keep the nation together.

In the potentially volatile Hindi belt, we see today some strange scenes. In Lucknow, we witness a spectacle of Congress supported casteism; in Patna, it is communist-backed casteism. In Bhopal, a sharply divided Congress is all set for a fight to the finish. Together, these three States account for nearly 1/3rd of the Indian people. The BJP is the only central common force in all the three States. In the three States put together, the BJP is the largest single Party. It is here that the next major political battle will be fought.

Congress on the Wane

The Congress' position in the country is really unenviable. True, it has managed half the strength of the Lok Sabha but this has been achieved not through election, but through defections. In the Rajya Sabha, however, it has only 1/3rd the strength of the House. When you step out of Parliament and go to the State legislatures, the party is controlling barely 1/5th of the population.

The last two rounds of Assembly elections have thus gravely undermined the authority of the Rao government to speak and act on behalf of the whole country. The Rao government today has been reduced to the status of a lame-duck government. For such a government to continue for a whole year would be an infliction which the country cannot afford. The nation's interests would be very seriously compromised.

Fresh Mandate Necessary

I therefore, reiterate today the BJP's demand that the Rao government should seek a fresh mandate from the people.

The squabbling high command leading its doddering, dwindling troops is really behaving like the blind Dhritarashtra of the Mahabharata. They encouraged the loot of India by their kith and kin; and they have reduced Indraprastha, the Delhi of today, to an immense Hall of Illusions..

The biggest illusion sought to be created is in relation to the 'miracle' of prosperity and well being brought about by Rao's economic reforms. For decades, Congress has had India follow the Soviet model of economic development. Words like liberalisation, decontrol, free market were for long an anathema to its ears. The result has been a licence permit quota raj which destroyed the immense economic potential of this country. The BJP is the only Party which has been persistently against this licence, permit, quota raj and has always been advocating deregulation, delicensing and debureaucratisation.

Let us also accept this. It was economic expediency and not any conviction which is behind the Congress party's new found enthusiasm for liberalisation. Also, the discovery that there is more lucre in this method.

Liberalisation is Another Opportunity to Loot

For the Congress, obviously, liberalisation is another opportunity to loot, as was the licence and permit raj to amass wealth.

The *Economist* of London recently did a survey of India. The author, Emma Duncan, drew an imaginary line from Kanpur to Kanya Kumari. She was talking of economics, not politics. She found that to the west of the line there was peace, law and order and greater economic progress. But to the east of the line, she discovered chaos.

It is not a coincidence that today the BJP finds itself in power in most of the places west of the land, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. In Karnataka and Goa, the BJP is the principal opposition.

Very impressive. Highly satisfactory. But look at the east of the land. Lucknow, Patna, Calcutta, Bhopal. As a political party we can be happy at the discomfiture of our opponents. But as true Indians, can we be happy at the plight of our brethren?

BJP: the Single Most Powerful Political Party

The BJP is already the single most powerful political Party in the country. This is the single most important development of the past few months. But the task before us is more daunting. That should make our resolve stronger and our mood humbler.

An extremely satisfying aspect of the verdict in this latest poll encounter is that it confounds our critics who have always been inclined to pooh-pooh our progress by some or other simplistic explanation.

In 1989, it was anti-Congressism that gave us 86 seats in the Lok Sabha, these critics argued. In 1991, according to them, it was just Ayodhya. The BJP is a one-issue party, they glibly pronounced. This time, they really feel baffled.

Minoritism Boomeranged

All poll analysts are agreed on one point. A major factor which contributed to the Congress's debacle this time is the anti-Congress mood of the Muslim voter. The Congress Party has been the progenitor and the principal promoter of 'minoritism'. And now this approach has boomeranged. The Congress Party has become hoist with its own petard.

A recent book by Tavleen Singh on Kashmir quotes an interesting conversation which the author had with a senior Hizbul Mujahideen leader Abdul Majeed Dar. In the course of this talk, Dar observed: "We now feel that a solution to the Kashmir problem will only come if there is a BJP government in power in Delhi. At least they are straight forward *Mukhalfat bhi karenge to khul key karenge...*"

Secularism as practised by Congress and our other adversaries is a shame. It is hypocrisy. It is what we describe as pseudo-secularism, a euphemism for "vote bank politics". More and more Muslims are coming to realise that the BJP is an honest and straight forward Party which is committed to secularism in a genuine sense. When the Party defines Secularism as 'Justice for all and appeasement of none', it means what it says and does what it promises. This section of the Muslim electorate made a very valuable contribution to the Gujarat and Maharashtra verdicts.

Challenging Months Ahead

In this election, the BJP focussed on three issues: Corruption, Criminalisation and Vote-bank politics.

While the first two issues gave us an opportunity to attack the Congress for the decadence and degeneration it has inflicted on public life, it is the third which enabled us to project our distinct ideological stand point.

Those who condemn us as communal because of our forthright stand on Kashmir, on Ayodhya, on Bangladeshi infiltration, on ISI activities etc., are themselves actuated by considerations of communal vote banks.

Judging by the manner in which the Congress and other parties have tried to raise a hullabaloo over the issue of Bangladeshi immigrants not only in the Maharashtra State Assembly but even in the Parliament, it appears that they are still not able to understand the meaning of the verdict. The BJP's attack on these three-fold maladies must continue as vigorously as ever.

The BJP is proud of its contribution to the Ayodhya movement. But it is not a one-issue party. Its approach to the problems of the country is holistic. Also, our outlook is integrative and assimilative, not divisive. The months ahead are challenging; and they also offer us an opportunity we must not let go.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

15 July, 1995

BJP the Front Runner

We are meeting here today three months after our Virar conclave and three and a half months after the National Executive meeting at Goa.

The BJP's meetings at Goa and Virar had been held against the backdrop of our remarkable success in the February-March Assembly elections. We scored splendid victories in Maharashtra (in alliance with the Shiv Sena) and Gujarat (on our own). In Bihar, we pushed the Congress to the third place and became the principal opposition to the JD government.

The February-March round of Assembly elections thus showed up the BJP as a front-runner in the race to the Lok Sabha.

Reputation of Congress Party Besmirched

The three month interlude between our Virar meeting and today has witnessed a series of political events and developments which have reinforced the BJP's vantage position in national politics. A recent happening has irredeemably besmirched the reputation of our principal adversary, the Congress Party. I would specifically like to list five of the more significant developments:

The Supreme Court, in a recent case, Sarla Mudgal Vs. Union of India, admonished Government of India for disregarding Article 44 of the Constitution and failing to enact a Uniform Civil Code for all Indian citizens.

The Ramamurthy Tribunal has struck down the ban on Vishwa Hindu Parishad as illegal. The Tribunal has held that government's decision was prompted by "extraneous considerations" and that the

testimony it presented to substantiate its case was false and spurious.

The fiasco in Charar-e-Sharief has thoroughly exposed the bankruptcy of Government of India's Kashmir policy. In the parliamentary debate on Charar-e-Sharief, it was extremely distressing to hear the Prime Minister declare that his government was willing to make all concessions to militants, short of *azadi*.

The most important event of the last quarter has been the change of government in Uttar Pradesh.

BJP Succeeds in Removing Mulayam Singh

In the recent Assembly elections, the BJP succeeded in making criminalisation of politics a focal issue. This malady has undermined law and order in the country, and has imperilled the life of average citizen. The people of UP have had a bitter experience of this during Mulayam Singh's tenure. In fact, it is this attribute of Mulayam Singh's government that alienated the BSP from the SP and made them join hands with the BJP.

The 'Operation Mulayam Singh' was executed with considerable finesse. Two objectives were simultaneously subserved. The first was a political objective: the Mulayam Singh government has been dislodged; and the second, a social objective: the Mayawati government has been installed with the support of the BJP, and this has given a sense of pride, satisfaction and reassurance to the Dalits, and contributed greatly to promoting social harmony in Hindu society.

Criminality in Politics

The tandoor outrage in New Delhi last week has dramatically highlighted how the Congress Party itself has contributed unabashedly towards promoting criminals and criminality in politics.

The issue does not relate to an individual or to just one criminal act. That a person capable of such beastly conduct should have over a period of time been the generous recipient of patronage and favours from numerous VIPs belonging to the ruling party is in itself a damning indictment of the party.

Tandoor Congress

When in May last, the Congress Party formally split, the splinter group was contemptuously described by the establishment as the *tinaka* Congress (the Congress of straw)! The official Congress has now earned for itself the ugly sobriquet of tandoor Congress! Reports about this macabre killing have generated an intense sense of revulsion all over the country. The crime will never be forgotten or forgiven.

The Prime Minister is reported to have sought a report from the IB as to who are the Ministers and ex-Ministers mixed up in the murky episode. Let the report be immediately made public. While the courts will deal with the alleged assassin or assassins, the people would very much like to know who are the Congress politicians directly responsible for the decadence and degeneration that has set in national politics.

TINA Factor Eliminated

In the past few years, the Indian party system has undergone a radical metamorphosis.

For decades, the Indian party structure was recognised as a single dominant party set-up. Congress hegemony was so pronounced that opposition parties generally had come to believe in what was described as the TINA factor, namely, 'There Is No Alternative' (to the Congress). All opposition activity for the purpose of dislodging government was directed towards forging anti-Congress alliances and forming non-Congress governments. Anti-Congressism, thus, provided the main dynamics for change of government. Party programmes and ideology had little relevance to poll verdicts.

The BJP, however, succeeded in eliminating the TINA factor. Since 1991, it has been widely acknowledged as the National Alternative to the Congress.

Cultural Nationalism

A major success of the BJP in the past few years has been its ability to make ideology relevant to voters' choice. We have succeeded in precipitating a nationwide debate on Cultural Nationalism versus Pseudo-Secularism. More and more people have come to realise that in the name of secularism, our opponents have been wanting the nation to disown its essential personality, which

is *Hindutva*. One may well describe it as *Bharatiyata* or Indianness. But the content is the same.

In an earlier study of Indian secularism (when sordid vote-bank politics had not yet enmeshed Indian political parties as it has done now), Donald Eugene Smith wrote: "... despite the composite nature of Indian culture, Hinduism remains by far the most powerful and pervasive element in the culture. Those who lay great stress on the composite nature of Indian culture frequently minimize this basic fact. Hinduism has indeed provided the essential genius of Indian culture".

But even as the BJP continued to grow, the Congress has got caught in the grips of a death-wish. It has been hurtling downwards at a dizzy pace. No one is thinking any longer of finding or forging an alternative to the Congress. A search is presently on for an alternative to the BJP!

BJP Rule in Delhi inevitable

Only recently commenting on the possible outcome of the next Lok Sabha polls, Janata Dal leader, Shri RK Hegde, predicted that BJP's rule in New Delhi had become inevitable. The only way, according to him, this could possibly be averted is for all parties of NF and LF to accept Congress leadership even before the elections, form a coalition under Shri Narasimha Rao and concertedly exert to stop the BJP's advance!

Shri Hegde's proposal has been a non-starter, but it certainly underscores two facts. The Congress Party is no longer the country's premier party; the BJP has already become the principal pole of Indian politics.

BJP Poised for a Big Leap

Today, the BJP is poised for a big leap forward. No one disputes this fact. Nevertheless, in political circles there is cynicism that the 1996 Lok Sabha may be a hung Lok Sabha, that the BJP may be the largest single party, but that it will not get a clear majority.

The BJP is resolved to disprove this scepticism. Systematic poll planning and sustained hard work in the coming months will certainly enable us to achieve this. Karnataka and Maharashtra were the two States where all observers predicted a hung Assembly. But the voters favoured a clear verdict. And that is what finally happened.

The collective psyche of the electorate disfavours a hung legislature. If only it is able to identify clearly the front runner, it swings massively in its favour so that the verdict is unambiguous.

I am optimistic that this country will witness this phenomenon in the coming Lok Sabha elections also.

Anti-Congressism grew when Congress was in office. It was more or less congruent with an anti-Establishment feeling. It is significant that anti-BJP-ism is sought to be promoted to prevent BJP from coming to power, even though the BJP is not yet the Establishment. It is acknowledgement, thus, of the vigour of an ideological viewpoint.

Pure negativism does not sustain governments. No anti-Congress alliance survived for long. The fate of anti-BJP combinations would be even worse.

Nationalism and Idealism

BJP's ascendancy, we must appreciate, heralds the rise both of ideology as well as of idealism. The Party's phenomenal growth in the past few years owes as much to our nationalistic stand on Kashmir, Ayodhya, Uniform Civil Code, Cow Protection, Illegal Immigration, Globalisation of the Indian Economy etc., as it does to the general feeling that BJP is a Party with a difference. Whether in opposition or in government, the Party is committed to probity and integrity in public life, and that it is earnestly exerting to cleanse Indian politics. This imposes a great responsibility on us.

High Expectations from BJP Ruled States

On the one hand, we have to make the people appreciate more and more that BJP's concept of cultural nationalism is an enlightened and assimilative concept, and that *Hindutva* rejects theocracy, bigotry and obscurantism, and on the other hand Party activists have also to be very scrupulous in their personal behaviour and upright in their conduct of public affairs.

BJP is presently ruling four important states of the country. In these States particularly we have to measure up to the high expectations of the people.

Vande Mataram!

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National Executive

Pune

7 November, 1995

BJP Emerges as the Front Runner

I welcome you all to this two-day meeting of the National Executive. This will be the last meeting of this Executive. This Executive was constituted shortly after our Bangalore session held in mid-1993. During your tenure of two-and-a-quarter years, 15 Assembly elections have been held. The results have been extremely gratifying for the Party. We emerged victorious in four of these States – in Delhi, Rajasthan and Gujarat, on our own, and in Maharashtra, in alliance with the Shiv Sena. In Karnataka and Bihar, we outstripped the Congress Party to become the recognised principal Opposition.

On the whole, these 15 Assembly elections held in 1993, 1994 and 1995 have clearly established the BJP as not only the principal challenger to the Congress at the national level but also as the front runner for the Lok Sabha race.

In the new Executive to be formed after the Bombay Plenary, certain mandatory changes would have to be made. Under a recent amendment in the BJP Constitution, at least 25% of the members of the new Executive would have to be newcomers.

The main task before this Pune meeting is to prepare draft resolutions for the Plenary Session. The Plenary Session is going to be a mammoth affair. Only a couple of important resolutions can be considered there. If the National Executive desires, topical issues for which time may not be available at the Plenary, can be commented on in the form of resolutions passed by the Executive.

Frequency of Elections should be Curtailed

We are meeting in Mumbai just a few months before the Eleventh General Elections to the Lok Sabha. Also scheduled for polls at the same time are the State Assemblies of Haryana, Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Kerala. A late addition to this list is the country's largest state, Uttar Pradesh. The BJP demands that all these elections be held together.

Indeed, it is the time when political parties should come together to devise plans which could restore the synchronicity of Lok Sabha and all Assembly elections. Upto the Fourth General Elections, that is until 1967, all these elections were held simultaneously. Since 1971, however, delinking has taken place. This has added considerably to the cost of elections. Now almost every year, or alternate year, there is a mini General Election. This is not good either for the health of democracy or that of the administration.

A Lok Sabha election ordinarily presents to the people an opportunity for a five-yearly stock-taking. The 1996 elections, too, will be an occasion to evaluate the performance of the Narasimha Rao Government. During this period, corruption and criminalisation have grown by leaps and bounds. National unity and security have become gravely imperilled.

But the 1996 Lok Sabha polls is a special landmark. On 15 August, 1997, India will be observing the Golden Jubilee of its independence. The Twelfth General Elections to the Lok Sabha will ordinarily be due in 2001. So, the 1996 polls may well be the last Lok Sabha elections of the century!

In our campaign for the coming encounter, therefore, it is not just the last five years we should focus on. Let our campaign become a stock-taking of half a century. Out of the 48 years since 1947, Congress has ruled the country for 44 years. So, if any party is to be blamed for the present plight of the country, it is the Congress.

Congress has Failed to Fulfil Promise

In his famous 'Tryst-with-Destiny' speech on the midnight of 14 August, 1947, Prime Minister Pandit Nehru had identified the main task before the nation as "the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity."

India has human and material resources which even the developed countries of the West would envy. But despite these advantages, even after half a century of independence, we are far away from fulfilment of the task enunciated by Pandit Nehru.

India continues to be one of the most deprived countries of the world, not only in comparison to Western countries, but even among countries of the developing world, in so far as basic living conditions and eradication of poverty, disease and ignorance are concerned.

BJP to Present Blueprint for Ideal Governance

This situation has to change; the BJP is resolved to do so. During the past few years, the BJP has come to occupy centre-stage in national politics. Crores of our countrymen perceive the BJP as the only ray of hope in an otherwise dark and dismal situation. We have to measure up to their expectations and during the run-up to the Lok Sabha present to them our vision of BHARAT-2001, and how we plan to achieve it. This would be the party's manifesto for the next Lok Sabha elections.

I am naming eleven members of this Executive today on the Manifesto Committee. I expect them to seek the counsel of other colleagues, more specially our Chief Ministers, the host of intellectuals and academicians and administrators and servicemen who have become associated with us in the past few years, and also experts in various fields, and produce a blueprint for ideal governance that would make our country Ram Rajya in the truest sense of the word.

Vande Mataram!

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National Council

Mumbai

10 November, 1995

Mr. Chairman, Reception Committee, Brother and Sister Delegates,

Let me, at the outset, express my deep gratitude to you for having elected me the President of this great Party for yet another term.

The tasks before the Party today are more challenging than ever before. The expectations of the people are also very high. I have no doubt, however, that with the cooperation of the over 8 million members the BJP has on its rolls, and the crores of supporters and well-wishers we have in the country today, we shall be able to measure up to the high hopes the nation has from us.

From Bombay to Mumbai

In 1980, the city of Bombay had hosted the First Plenary Session of the Bharatiya Janata Party. That first all-India gathering of the Party had greatly impressed everyone. Late MC Chagla, who had been specially invited to the session as a guest-speaker, had exhorted the assembled delegates in these words:

“To say that the BJP is communal is absolutely absurd and without any basis I admire your discipline, your honesty and your dedication. Let me now suggest that you project your future as a national party. Go round the country and tell the people that you are not a regional party, (but) as Vajpayeeji has rightly said, a national party, and the only party that can replace the Congress...”

Fifteen years later when we are meeting again in this city for another Plenary Session, we have reason to feel gratified that our exertions have made Chaglaji's desire a reality. The BJP is no longer

deemed a Party confined to any region. It has a nation-wide base and a nation-wide appeal. Today, Bombay has been officially renamed Mumbai. For the BJP, this 15 year journey from Bombay to Mumbai has been an arduous but exciting one. It has been a very satisfying one also. Of course, there have been many ups and downs on the way. But at the end of it all, BJP has come to occupy a position in national politics that no other non-Congress party has ever held since Independence.

Transformation of Indian Politics

Indeed, during these 15 years, Indian politics has undergone a radical transformation. This has happened because of the BJP. Unlike in earlier years, a party's ideology and viewpoint have started influencing elections more and more. Also, the nature of political polarisation has changed.

For decades, national politics remained polarised into two camps: one, the Congress camp and, second, the non-Congress camp. Elections were essentially a combat between the political haves and the political have-nots. The success of the constituents of the non-Congress camp owed mainly to an anti-establishment feeling. The principal dynamics of political change, thus, was anti-Congressism. Ideology, and even party programmes, were practically irrelevant to poll verdicts.

BJP's Uncompromising Nationalistic Approach

BJP's phenomenal growth in the late-eighties and in the nineties can be attributed to the people's enthusiastic support for BJP's stand on Jammu and Kashmir, on Ayodhya, on illegal immigration from Bangladesh, on ISI activities, and on Uniform Civil Code – a stand based on positive considerations of national unity and security. On all these issues, non-BJP parties have a diametrically opposite view. In fact, it is the BJP's uncompromising nationalistic approach to these issues which has made its adversaries gang up and decry the BJP as "communal" and "anti-secular".

The net result is that even though the BJP is not yet the Establishment, the two new political camps into which national politics has become polarised today are: one, the BJP camp, and the other, the non-BJP camp.

Genuine Secularism

A slander campaign has been let loose against the BJP by its adversaries that the BJP is anti-Muslim, that if BJP comes to power, it will make India a theocratic Hindu State, etc.

We refute the slander with all the emphasis at our command, and question the secular credentials of these critics. We regard them as pseudo-secularists.

It must be understood, however, that pseudo-secularists are of two brands. There are those who basically subscribe to the Marxist view that religion is the “opium of the masses”. For them only an irreligious state can be truly secular. The second and larger group, mainly of politicians, is that for whom secularism is only a euphemism for vote-bank politics. They are not concerned with the welfare of these so-called minorities. Their only interest is: the minority vote! Depending on their assessment of which way the wind is blowing these politicians can be as enthusiastic about reconstructing the Babri Mosque at the same spot as they can be about the creation of a Ramalaya Trust for building the Rama Temple!

The BJP is unequivocally committed to genuine secularism, as conceived by our Constitution makers. Their concept had three ingredients, and all these have been written into the Constitution. These are:

1. Rejection of theocracy;
2. Equality of all citizens irrespective of their faith; and,
3. Guarantee of full freedom to every citizen to practise and preach his religion.

In 1947, even though partition was based on religion, and even though Pakistan declared itself an Islamic State, India opted for secularism. This happened because Indian nationalism has its roots in the age-old culture of this country, which is essentially Hindu. Theocracy is alien to Hindu polity, history and culture. It is significant that Bangladesh, which became independent in 1971 with India’s help, started off as a secular country, but with the passage of time it jettisoned secularism, and became, like Pakistan, an Islamic State.

We are convinced that, as part of the national mainstream, Muslims in India have a great future. I have three suggestions to offer them:

1. Concentrate on education;
2. Trust the Hindus, who have made India a secular country; and,
3. Emancipate yourselves from the clutches of these vote-bank peddlers.

Cultural Nationalism Vs Pseudo-Secularism

Thanks to the BJP, a vigorous national debate is presently on in the country. The theme is Cultural Nationalism Versus Pseudo-Secularism.

In *Hind Swaraj* Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

“The English have taught us that we were not one nation before and that it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation they were able to establish one kingdom.”

The nation in India is not the result of British rule or, for that matter, of the freedom movement. Nor is it a product of the Constitution of India. In fact, the freedom movement itself was the manifestation of the national spirit that arose to fire the struggle for *swaraj*. The Constitution of India actually recognised an ancient nation that has existed for thousands of years in this land. When cow protection was incorporated in the Constitution as one of the Directive Principles, it was the acknowledgement of the cultural nationalism which sustains the life of this nation.

Disowning Country's Essential Personality

The post-Independence political leadership has virtually internalised the British view of India and Indian nationalism. In the name of secularism, these leaders have been exerting to have the country disown its essential personality. This is what has contributed most to the rise of fissiparous tendencies and divisive politics after Independence.

The BJP firmly believes that only by recognising the limitless potency of the cultural foundations of Indian nationalism can divisive forces be weeded out and the nation welded together. It is immaterial how you describe this concept of cultural nationalism as

Hindutva, or as *Bharatiyata*, or as Indianness. The content is the same. When the BJP struggles for the construction of a Rama Temple in Ayodhya, it is with a view to strengthening these cultural foundations, the ultimate aim being to raise a magnificent *Rashtra Mandir* of *Bharat Mata*.

***Hindutva* – a Unifying Principle**

Hindutva, thus, is a unifying principle. It is a collective endeavour to protect and re-energise the soul of India. It is a positive approach that unleashes the creative potential of this great land and cries halt to the shameful efforts of any section to benefit at the expense of others. *Hindutva* is discipline and self-discipline. And for its votaries, it is *Tapasya* and not a ticket to legislatures or offices.

Uniform Civil Code

In *Sarla Mudgal and others vs the Union of India*, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgement. This judgement, the third of its kind, was nothing short of a severe indictment of successive regimes at the Centre for their failure to implement a Uniform Civil Code and for ignoring the provisions of Article 44.

The Rao government has chosen to reiterate the age-old defence of Muslim Personal Law, a defence that rests on the flawed premise that it is immutable and that any change must come from within the community. It is flawed because Muslim Personal Law is not immutable, nor is it a legal code that the Muslims have been following from ancient times. It was given legal sanctity only in 1937, by when the British had firmed up their policy of using the Muslim League to thwart nationalist aspirations.

Separate personal laws only perpetuate gender inequality. While every political party opposed to the BJP does not tire of mouthing platitudes and paying lip service to the cause of women, they have done precious little to remove the greatest iniquity of all that is forced on women by personal law.

The Supreme Court has asked the Union Government to take a fresh look at Article 44 of the Constitution with a view to securing a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the country. The Narasimha Rao government has characteristically chosen to look elsewhere. The Prime Minister even made a trip to Bareilly to pledge

his opposition to Article 44 and gave similar assurances to Muslim delegations which called on him.

Maharashtra Government's Commendable Step

I congratulate the Maharashtra government on taking the first step towards ensuring equality before the law and removing the debilitating influence of personal laws. The State Government here has introduced two path breaking bills which together constitute the first step towards ushering in a Uniform Civil Code for the residents of Maharashtra irrespective of their religion, race or caste. The first aims at introducing a uniform law preventing bigamous marriages and thereby achieving the acclaimed system of monogamy. The second bill, also in keeping with the letter and spirit of Article 44, provides for a uniform civil law of adoption and is applicable to every person irrespective of religion, caste, race and sex.

Corruption and Criminalisation

There are three major issues that critically influence today's internal political situation, hence our governance. These three are interrelated and feed upon each other, but they also operate independently. These three aspects are: money and governance; crime and governance; and thirdly, corruption and governance.

Money Power in Politics

The role of money in governance is very directly a contribution of the Congress culture to our polity. It has now acquired very damaging dimensions as it has openly been conferred legitimacy by the highest in the land. In the last few years, we have witnessed how money power has altered the arithmetic even of our elected Parliament. Several party splits and wholesale defections were engineered in Parliament, unabashedly through the lubricant of money. The Prime Minister justified the decision to absorb the defecting MPs into the Congress Party as "politically, morally and ethically a correct decision."

I would wish to caution the country that this pernicious role of money power to pervert the poll verdict is an extremely damaging development. If we permit ourselves to be as cynical about it as the

Prime Minister is, or even to be indifferent to it, then the entire democratic endeavour of our nation will flounder. We cannot permit this to happen. The BJP commits itself afresh to stopping this moral haemorrhage of our polity.

Congress leaders often try to explain away corruption by describing it as an “international phenomenon”. But, whereas all over the world countries are cracking down on corruption and corrupt political leaders, in India this venality continues to flourish.

The magnitude of corruption continues to increase with each passing year. Bofors was all about Rs 65 crores; the Securities Scam was more than hundred times that amount. In between are smaller scams like the sugar scandal pulled off by individual ministers. Smugglers, narcotic barons, vice syndicates and protection racketeers have become the prime patrons of the Congress, as much is indicated by the Vohra Committee report which only touches the tip of the iceberg.

Nexus Between Crime and Politics

In the recent Assembly elections, a key issue which made the people reject the Congress was the nexus between crime and politics. The Vohra Committee report has highlighted how “mafia organisations” have now begun to run almost “a parallel government”. The actions of this government stand condemned by that report, which is the Home Ministry’s own report. The report was submitted more than two years back. Yet till this day, government has not moved even an inch in pursuance of the recommendations of the Committee. The fact that the highest court of our land has found it necessary to demand government clarifications on the Vohra Committee report is a further indictment of this government.

As if that were not enough, the activities of self-styled godmen with direct access to the highest in the land are now attempted to be covered up. I wish to express my serious concern at reports that the principal absconder in the Bombay blasts case, Dawood Ibrahim, is not even going to be charged for that great crime against India!

Notwithstanding the Finance Minister’s tall claims of having checked the underworld economy, it is now estimated that black money accounts for 50% of the money supply. *Fortune* magazine

has rated India and China as the most corrupt economies in Asia and advise foreign firms on how to work the system. For most Western analysts, slush money is the lubricant that makes the system work in India.

Public Funding of Elections

Way back in 1971, on an initiative taken in the Lok Sabha by Shri AB Vajpayee, a Joint Parliamentary Committee was set up to make recommendations about electoral reforms. This Joint Committee considered, *inter alia*, the role of money power in politics and accepted in principle that the State should be responsible for all election expenses. It recommended that election expenses today borne by the candidate or the party should be progressively shifted to the State.

A few years later, a Committee headed by Justice Wanchoo was set up by government to devise ways and means to curb the growth of black money. The Wanchoo Committee also made a similar recommendation and urged government to give election grants to political parties on the West German model.

I feel this matter brooks no further delay. A scheme of public funding of elections must be urgently drawn up and implemented. Also, the Dinesh Goswami Committee's recommendations about poll reform must be implemented without further delay.

Internal Security

Corruption, criminalisation and Vote-bank politics have together made India a permissive state, incapable of discharging its primary duty of safeguarding the security and integrity of the nation and the life of the common man.

The common man is living in an atmosphere of increasing lack of security. The law and order machinery has virtually collapsed and the very foundations of the country are being challenged. The ISI has spread its network throughout the length and breadth of the country. Whether it is Kashmir or Tamil Nadu, the ISI is involved in subversive activities.

The explosions that occur with sickening regularity – be it the republic day parade in Jammu or the one in which the Punjab Chief Minister, Shri Beant Singh was killed – have left the Indian agencies

clueless and non-plussed. The IB has been converted into the Congress dirty tricks department and is busy doing the ruling party's bidding. The ministers in the Home Ministry are undecided on a common strategy to meet the challenges of internal security.

The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) has been allowed to lapse under pressure from the pseudo-secularists and as part of the Congress vote-bank politics. This was the only preventive law to deal with terrorism and internal security threats. TADA has been allowed to lapse without putting into place a substitute law to deal with the exigencies of terrorism and internal security threats.

Congress Responsible for Many Problems

Most of the country's problems relating to internal security have their roots in the petty, partisan policies of the Congress Party.

It is the Congress Party which has kept Kashmir away from the rest of the country, which has been guilty of foisting a corrupt feudal family on the state for decades, and which has had no qualms about rigging election after election in that State. Had it not been for Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee's martyrdom in 1953, we might have lost Jammu and Kashmir long back.

Also, it was the desire to humble its main political adversary in Punjab, the Akalis, which led New Delhi to promote Bhindranwale. Again, it was the desire for vote-banks in Tamil Nadu that made Shri Rajiv Gandhi mess up our relationship with Sri Lanka.

North-East Gravely Imperilled

Pandit Nehru bequeathed to us Kashmir. Mrs. Gandhi left behind Punjab. Rajivji gave India the mess called LTTE. And now Prime Minister Rao, apart from further complicating the muddle in Kashmir, has been making his own contribution to the North-East.

What has been happening in the North-East in the past few years may sound bizarre and incredible. But it is true, and the Prime Minister knows it.

The Governor of one North-Eastern State informed New Delhi in writing that the Chief Minister and a colleague of his were colluding with the terrorists. No action was taken against party men. The Governor, a highly decorated former Army officer, resigned.

Intelligence agencies reported about another North-Eastern State that when salaries are distributed to government servants, a certain percentage is cut at the source and this cut of around 10% goes to the terrorists! In yet another State, arms for terrorists were smuggled in the car of the Chief Minister.

All this is truly unprecedented: terrorism patronised by the party in power. On the one hand, we spend money on security forces to fight terrorism. More than money, we risk our young men to combat terrorism. On the other, terrorists are financed from out of government coffers. The security forces are aware of it. The intelligence agencies, too, know about it. They inform the Centre, but nothing happens.

When we talk about the criminal-politician nexus, let us not think only of Bihar or UP, of Bombay or Gujarat, or of Delhi. There is a greater threat in the North-East, a threat to national integrity.

The Mess in Jammu and Kashmir

National security is a multi-dimensional challenge; it has many integrals. The primary requirement is of building up national aspirations and a national will. It is precisely these essentials that have been eroded in the past decades by Congress misrule. It is imperative to restore to the nation a sense of its own destiny; and to recognise afresh that nationalism, sovereignty and preservation of vital national interests must continue to have primacy in the management both of our internal and of our external affairs.

We must be able to identify and define India's vital interests: those aspects of our national good and welfare against which we shall not countenance any assault, or dilution, no matter what the cost. I stress this because it is the absence of such an enunciation that has, over the years, hurt our national interests to such an extent that our government now compromises with them, at the first application of pressure.

The country really feels aghast to witness the pusillanimous response of the Government of India to the challenge which India faces in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Last year, both the Houses of Parliament passed unanimous resolutions expressing the nation's resolve to stamp out terrorism in J&K State, and also to recover Pakistan occupied Kashmir. In an

astounding volte-face this year, Prime Minister Rao declared in Parliament that his government was willing to concede anything to the militants “short of *azadi*”! Serious consideration is presently being given to the National Conference’s demand for a return to the pre-1953 position!

No Return to pre-1953 Position

The BJP is not only opposed to turning the integration clock back but is of the view that Article 370, which is a major psychological and constitutional barrier between J&K State and the rest of India, must be scrapped.

The BJP urges devolution of greater powers in favour of the States, more particularly financial powers. But we also believe that devolution of greater power exclusively in favour of J&K State at this point of time would put a premium on insurgency and so would be a dangerous course of action. It would unleash disintegrative forces all over the country.

The Congress government’s total mishandling of the Kashmir issue has seriously jeopardised our national security. Further, by the manner in which the government is permitting the internationalising of this issue, which is principally internal, it stands charged with committing a very grave national wrong. The mess which this government has made of the J&K issue highlights its failures in respect of both the principal arms of national security – defence and foreign policy.

National Defence

Despite the Prime Minister’s assertions to the contrary, we are strongly of the view that management of the country’s defence is not a part-time job. The fact that since 1993, there has not been a full-time Defence Minister has cost the country dearly.

I must highlight the serious situation that currently obtains in our Armed Forces. There is a perceptible decline in their total combat effectiveness. Repeated reductions in budgetary allocations to defence have inevitably resulted in a diminution in the fighting capabilities of our Armed Forces. Two Chiefs of Staff – of the Navy and the Army – in an unprecedented step, have publicly given voice to this concern.

A failure to take timely decisions, whereafter to provide the needed budgetary support, and then to fail to ensure quick implementation, has resulted in the requirements of our Armed Forces piling up. Of course, money is a great constraint. That is where planning and leadership come in, and that is precisely where this government has failed. Successive Defence Five-Year Plans have been converted into mere theoretical exercises.

An objective analysis of our security considerations would reveal that there is no option whatsoever to India making itself militarily strong enough to withstand any possible threat from Pakistan. This implies that, in real terms, we have to acquire more than a matching capability in relation to ground forces, air power and the navy.

The Indian Ocean is progressively becoming attractive for not only Western fleets who maintain permanent presence but also for China which has started acquiring permanent bases. Our Navy, hence, needs the size as well as the reach not only to protect the immediate borders but to keep the sea lanes open.

Indian defence R&D as well as the industrial capability to produce sophisticated weaponry has come a long way, despite the setback of very reduced orders during the last decade. Increased cooperation with Israel would be of great benefit.

Foreign Policy

After the end of the cold war, as the international community struggles to find a recognisable global order, and as relations among the world's major powers continue to shift, Indian foreign policy demonstrates all the ill-effects of lack of thought, and of leadership. India's global standing in the comity of nations has been diminishing under the stewardship of this government.

In the absence of thought, there is no stability in our policy; ad-hocism has caused great harm to our national interests. The internationalising of Kashmir has already been cited. The disarray in India's Afghanistan policy, only too patent, is another example. What happens in that neighbouring country has a direct consequence for India's national well-being. We must be alive to the fact that there is a linkage between developments in Afghanistan and the valley of Kashmir.

A Barren Trip Abroad

Our foreign policy goals in the recent past have been dominated by two immediate objectives. The first was to prevent the resumption of military supply to Pakistan by the USA and by other Western powers like France and Britain. The second was to gain widespread acceptance for India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The Prime Minister's recent visit to Columbia and the US seemed conspicuously keyed on both these objectives. It is equally conspicuous that we have failed in both. A perceptive cartoonist depicted the PM displaying two empty suitcases at the customs counter and with hands upraised saying: "Absolutely nothing to declare".

India's International Standing Reaches New Depths

Washington added insult to injury when they had the Brown Amendment passed even while Prime Minister Rao was in the States. So far as our membership of the UN Security Council is concerned, the only head of government who openly backed our case was President Fidel Castro. Our leadership and opinion-makers have replaced the qualities of dignity, forbearance and decisiveness with cringing entreaties and whining protestations. Our ineffectiveness on the world stage has reached an all-time low under the present government.

It is because we have no clarity about vital national interests that this government has permitted even more critical areas to be compromised. I refer to our nuclear and missile development programme.

The Indian nation has a right to demand that the Missile Development Programme be carried forward without any let up or delay. The deployment of Prithvi missiles in the Western Sector also needs to be physically implemented.

India rejects 'Nuclear Apartheid'

We are unable to accept a thesis that whilst the national security of some can dictate even a continuation of nuclear tests, and that too, despite the NPT, India's security requirements are such that they can always be relegated to a position of irrelevance.

We regard the NPT and its recent extension and ratification as

an iniquitous arrangement. We believe that a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty can be arrived at but not through the creation of 'nuclear apartheid'. We cannot recognise that thesis which advocates a different yardstick for others.

Whilst the BJP reaffirms its commitment to a global and total eradication of all weapons of mass destruction, till such time as such an arrangement can be convincingly brought about, India must reserve to itself the right to take all such decisions as are in the interest of the nation. We urge upon this government, therefore, to join with us in giving expression to precisely this thought from the sovereign platform of our Parliament.

So far as the BJP is concerned, it would like to reiterate its view that against the background of both China and Pakistan having become nuclear powers, national security warrants that India, too, must develop a nuclear deterrent of its own.

A Second Look at the Constitution

Earlier this year, several eminent dignitaries including the former Rashtrapati, Shri R. Venkataraman, and our present Lok Sabha Speaker, Shri Shivraj Patil, publicly pleaded for a radical overhaul of the Indian Constitution. While some political thinkers have been canvassing for a long time for a switch over from the present Parliamentary form to the Presidential form of government, the above mentioned two leaders seemed to favour basic changes within the Parliamentary system itself – changes that would make the Chief Executive more than just the leader of the majority party.

I have noticed that this debate about basic constitutional reforms keeps cropping up with unflinching regularity every few years. The suggestions mooted evoke very positive responses at times when politics and politicians are perceived by the people to have become particularly degenerated.

I wish it were realised that the problems the country faces today arise less from the system and more from the nature of the people who are running the system. I may recall what Dr. Rajendra Prasad said in the Constituent Assembly when the Constitution was being finally adopted. He observed:

“If the people who are elected are capable, and men of

character and integrity, they would be able to make the best even of a defective Constitution. If they are lacking in these, the Constitution cannot help the country. After all, the Constitution like a machine, is a lifeless thing. It acquires life because of the men who control it and operate it and India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them.”

Even so, having run this Constitution for nearly half-a-century it would be perhaps worthwhile to have a second look at it in a systematic manner.

Set up Commission for a Comprehensive Review

I suggest that a Commission on the Constitution be set up to make a comprehensive review of the working of the Constitution in the past nearly 50 years, and to examine, *inter alia*:

1. whether any radical overhaul of the present constitutional arrangements is called for, and if so, in what direction;
2. the political consequences of the first-past-the-post system of elections which we have accepted; and the impact which the adoption of the List System of elections or a Mixed System of elections would have on making India a real participatory democracy;
3. the need to redraw the political map of India with needs of development and administration as the principal consideration; the ad-hoc responses to agitations have resulted in having states varying in size from half-a-million to one hundred million! Some of the larger states are stagnating principally because of their unwieldy size; it is unfortunate that even though the UP State Assembly has twice passed resolutions commending the carving out of a hill state called Uttaranchal, New Delhi has refused to move in this regard; and
4. need to overhaul radically the judicial system, which according to many eminent jurists including ex-Chief Justice of India, Shri Bhagwati, is “on the verge of collapse”.

Judicial Reforms

Because of the phenomenal delays involved in judicial adjudication, the faith of the common man in the judiciary has been rudely shaken. The costs involved in getting access to courts is too large for a common man. Judicial procedures have become cumbersome and tardy. The judiciary is also failing to attract the best legal talent on account of the defective appointment process and because of the lack of attractive service conditions.

The BJP favours the appointment of a national Judicial Commission which should be empowered to have a decisive and final say in judicial appointments. The Commission should also be empowered to deal with all complaints of misdemeanours against judicial authorities. The BJP is committed to simplification of judicial procedure and to the creation of a nation-wide Legal-aid programme which would make legal redressal available to the common man.

Economic Reforms [Gone Awry]

The deterioration in the country's political health is matched by steady worsening in the nation's economic condition. The last four years of the so-called reforms have been terrible for the great majority of Indians. Prices have soared, poverty has increased, the rupee has tumbled, and national debt has climbed to unprecedented heights. The government, of course, claims otherwise, but the big gap between its fancy claims and the stark reality on the ground is there for all to see. The people can no more be fooled by bogus claims and the little chits that foreigners dole out to us from time to time. Whenever and wherever an opportunity has been, the people have gone out and voted against the ruling party.

When the reforms were announced, the BJP gave them a guarded welcome, knowing fully well the Congress government's famous capacity for messing up even the simplest of reform programmes. For it wanted the ruling party to turn over a new leaf, and move away from the disastrous Nehru-Mahalanobis model that had brought the country to such a pass. It is the BJP which has been repeatedly asking for the dumping of the licence-permit-quota raj on which the entire edifice of the top-heavy model was erected.

In going in for reforms, the Congress was merely trying to keep up with the times after messing up the economy for the last half

century in the name of socialism. For the BJP, a debureaucratized economy without excessive controls was a matter of conviction. For the Congress, reforms were essentially a response to an acute balance-of-payment crisis.

But the government has failed and failed miserably, even in the limited reform exercise that it undertook with great fanfare in 1991.

Wrong Priorities

Its priorities are all wrong. Two out of three Indians live in villages and work on farms. There is, however, nothing for the farmer in the reforms and lately the government has been forced to concede that he has been totally neglected. Real investment in agriculture declined by half between 1980 and 1990, and the trend should have been reversed. There are no such signs, nor is there any improvement in small industries, which account for a major slice of industrial employment. This is the basic failure of the reform programme, and also the reason why it has failed to benefit the common man.

Fishermen Lose Jobs

In India, no economic strategy can be deemed sound that aggravates the unemployment problem. It is therefore that BJP is opposed to the present government's precipitate plunge into globalisation. Giving licences to multinational firms for deep sea fishing was a disaster for millions of small fishermen!

Rising Prices

About prices and inflation, the less said the better. Never before has the common man faced such a backbreaking spurt in prices, month after month, year after year. Potatoes sell at Rs 12 a kilo, five times the price four years ago. Milk and vegetables have become luxuries even for the middle class. Yet the government is more concerned about foreign foods like fried Chicken and hamburgers, than the empty *thalis* that face the common man and his family at mealtime.

Terrible Consequences of Devaluation

The Rupee has had a disastrous fall in the last four years. In June 1991, the Dollar was Rs 21.05; today, it is Rs 35 plus. This means the rupee has been losing a paisa per day to the dollar for every day of the Rao regime!

Let us realise the terrible consequences of the sinking rupee for the country's indebtedness. India's foreign debt today stands at 92 billion dollars. We are a nation of 920 million. If we distribute the debt evenly, it means 100 dollars per Indian man, woman and child. This meant Rs 2100 in 1991 but it means Rs 3500 in 1995.

Sheerly because of devaluation (fall in rupee value by one paisa per day to the dollar), in rupee terms India's foreign debt has been increasing by Rs 92 crore a day! This means that even without borrowing a single more dollar, in rupee terms our debt is increasing by over Rs 2700 crore a month or over Rs 32000 crore per year!

Well, that is how the Indian rupee fares in international markets. Now, let us see how the rupee has fared within India.

In June 1991, when Rao was sworn in, the Index for Industrial Workers (base year 1982) was 209. In other words, compared to 1982, the rupee was worth only 48 paise. In four years, in July 1995, the Index stands at 313. So, as compared to 1982, the rupee is worth today only about 32 paise.

Let me put it in another way. In June 1991, you could purchase certain essential goods for Rs 100. If you want the same goods in the same quantities today, you will have to pay Rs 150. Four years and 50 per cent inflation of prices within the country!

At the same time, look at the foreigner. Four years back, he had to pay a dollar, for say, a certain product. Today he needs to pay only 43 cents.

This is the true balance-sheet of our economic management under the present regime! Liberalisation of devaluation; Globalisation of indebtedness. Never in the history of India, this rich and great nation, have we been so deep in debt.

Widening Disparities

Poverty has increased, is increasing, and will increase along with widening disparities in incomes, if the present disastrous policies are allowed to continue further. The new policies have

helped a thin upper crust to get rich at the cost of the vast multitude beyond the pale, particularly in villages, where most of India lives, that is being pauperised. This is giving rise to social tensions that may soon be unbearable.

BJP has always been in favour of a liberal economy but it must benefit the common man. No development model can succeed in India, certainly not a model imported from outside, unless it focuses on the needs and interests of the poorest of the poor and the weakest of the weak. We do not wish to go back on liberalisation but we want priorities to be refocused on those areas and sectors which impinge on the life of the common man.

Care for the *Kisan* and the Artisan

Prices should come down instead of going up, national debt should be brought down instead of ballooning, and there should be more jobs. For this, there should be more investment in agriculture and small industry, as the *kisan* and the artisan are the backbone of the Indian society. We would try and build from the bottom up, for that is the only way we can build an enduring edifice of development, and one whose fruits can be shared by all.

The reforms are being put through in the name of liberalisation and globalisation. We are not against globalisation. We do not want India to be isolated in this great wide world, though India is too big to be isolated. But we do not want India to be swamped by external forces either, economic or otherwise. Globalisation must help India become strong and independent, as well as maintain her stature as a powerful nation in the region. Otherwise, it will be counter-productive.

Foreign Debt Doubled in Four Years

Globalisation should not be a one-way affair. So far, while it has opened up lucrative markets to rich countries, it has led to high inflation and high debt in poor countries, including India. India is now the largest debtor country in Asia, and the third largest in the world, though it also remains one of the poorest countries. India's foreign debt has nearly doubled in the last four years, a direct result, and perverse one, of lopsided reforms.

No Alternative to Economic Nationalism

Debt is a world wide problem, for the growing debt of the third world is an international malady that must be attacked at international level. The BJP calls upon both rich and poor countries and international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to put their heads together and find a solution for the debt crisis before it engulfs and throttles their enfeebled economies.

This is where *Swadeshi* or economic nationalism comes in. The BJP has always laid stress on two over-riding factors underlying national development policies: *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*, concepts rooted in political and economic nationalism. They are inter-linked. If *Swaraj* is the government of the people, for the people, *Swadeshi* is economy of the people, for the people. In a country like India, there is no alternative to *Swadeshi*.

Economic nationalism means that India's economic destiny will be decided by Indians, not by the World Bank or the IMF or foreign investors, whose cooperation in building up the economy is, however, welcome. India will deal with them on equal terms, on terms that are mutually beneficial.

It is because we felt that the terms were not mutually beneficial that the Enron contract had to be scrapped. India and Indians cannot be taken for granted. Once we allow ourselves to be taken for granted, we shall be at the receiving end and lose not only our economic sovereignty but political independence as well.

Let's Care for the Under-Privileged

The BJP has been a severe critic of the license, permit, quota raj imposed on the country by the Congress. But we do not agree with the simplistic view that India has remained poor and undeveloped only because of the lack of market incentives.

I wish the debate about India's progress goes beyond the confines of this government-control vs market-incentive polemic. Our more critical failures really have been on the educational, health and social fronts. It is these failures which are the main reason why India remains one of the most deprived nations even in the developing world.

The overwhelming emphasis on economic development in the narrowest sense of the term has clouded the vision of those in charge of steering India to the next century. We need to chart afresh our course so as to ensure that the social, cultural ethical and national dimensions are not overlooked. We need to restore ethics and morality as the cornerstone of our policies and programmes.

Two-Pronged Effort

Our effort must be two-fold: cleansing the polity and fulfilling social development goals. The BJP has been consciously striving for these objectives.

Welfare of the Weaker Sections

At Agra in 1988, the BJP drew up a cogently structured and comprehensive charter for the welfare of the scheduled castes. Even our adversaries recognized it as a bold but realistic document. At Bangalore two years back, we adopted a Social Charter which spelt out the Party's approach to all the socially under-privileged sections of society. There is need to educate the people about both these documents and to implement them.

Reservation for Women

At Vadodara last year the BJP demanded that as has been done in the case of local bodies, reservation for women must be extended to State Legislatures and to the Parliament.

I would like to urge BJP State Governments to make major investments in the girl child's health, nutrition and education, from infancy through adolescence. Let them promote a social agenda designed to end discrimination in any form against the girl child, ruthlessly punishing those who indulge in unethical practices like prenatal sex determination tests and female infanticide.

Politics: Mission or Commerce?

In India, prior to 1947, participation in politics was participation in the great national struggle for freedom. It was a mission, calling for great sacrifices. It attracted men of

outstanding calibre, possessing exceptional qualities of head and heart. Lokmanya Tilak and Savarkar and Gandhi would do any nation proud.

In modern democracies, politics is a profession like any other. As in other professions, like medicine and law, apart from intellectual prowess, professional integrity is a highly rated quality.

Unfortunately in India, politics has become utterly debased. The pre-Independence facade about politics being a mission continues; but in considerable measure, politics has degenerated into pure commerce! Integrity, political or financial, seems to be of no consequence.

BJP's Unique Position

The BJP's growth in recent years owes to two factors: first, the BJP's strongly nationalistic ideology, and secondly, the widespread belief that this is a Party different in values from the Congress and the parties sprung out of the Congress.

Lately, the Gujarat events distressed many. That our government there was able to overcome the crisis it faced is of course a matter of satisfaction. But what is more significant is the fact that even our bitterest critics generally summed up their comments with the question: Is BJP going the Congress way?

High Hopes from BJP

The question at once underscores two things: first, that the Congress is decadent and so people have no hopes from it; and, secondly, that the people regard the BJP as a different kind of Party and have high hopes from it. How come, the critic queried, the BJP is also betraying traces of Congress decadence?

When in 1993, BJP candidates were being announced for the Delhi Assembly, a couple of ugly incidents occurred outside the Party's Central Headquarters. Not being used to any such thing in the past, most of us were greatly disturbed by these happenings which were widely reported in the media. It is noteworthy, however, that the electorate viewed these incidents as an aberration, disregarded them and gave the BJP massive victory in the Delhi elections.

I have little doubt that the unfortunate Gujarat episode would have no effect whatsoever on the coming Lok Sabha election. But internally, we have to ponder over these matters. Our objective is not merely to succeed in winning elections. Our objective is to restore to politics the sense of mission and idealism which informed it during the freedom struggle.

Our Vision of a Resurgent India

The vision of a free, self-reliant and prosperous India, a democracy with its polity rooted in *Dharma*, that fired the imagination of millions of people during the freedom struggle, has become a distant chimera as dusk descends on the Twentieth Century and we approach the fiftieth anniversary of our emergence as a free country.

Morality and ethics have all but disappeared from public life and our leaders have ceased to be the nation's conscience keepers; the quick but short-term creation of wealth for a section of the Government's free market policies is driving our society towards mindless consumerism that has begun to gnaw at the very foundations of our social ethos; development and social policies are being dictated by the marketplace; and, the religion of markets has replaced the tenets of *dharma*.

The Great Task Before Us

The BJP is resolved to see that the next century, now barely five years away, becomes India's century. India is destined to make her entry into the 21st century under the leadership of powerful nationalist forces that are surfacing at every level in this great nation of a billion people. It is the historic task of the Bharatiya Janata Party to rise to the occasion as the focus of these forces and gently guide India towards the glorious destiny that awaits her.

This is not going to be easy. No country can be great if its people remain poor. The first task before us, before the BJP as well as the nation, is to wipe out the dark curse of poverty that has blighted the lives of millions of our countrymen for centuries. This is going to be the BJP's overriding aim in the coming years.

For this, we are prepared to cooperate with the whole wide world, rich countries and poor countries, large countries and small countries, countries with capital and technology to spare, countries with raw materials and finished products to trade with. But 99% of our attention has to be paid to what is happening or should happen inside the country, for only Indians can build India, not outsiders.

This is the vision of a resurgent India on the threshold of a new century that beckons us, a vision that binds India and BJP together in a bond of destiny that is both a sacred trust and hallowed pledge.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

New Delhi

23 December, 1995

I welcome you all to this first meeting of the party's new National Executive.

This two-day meeting will have to discharge its constitutional obligations with regard to setting up the Party's Parliamentary Board, Central Election Committee and Disciplinary Action Committee. Besides, the Executive will have to deliberate on the broad contours of the Party's plans and strategy for the forthcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. Party President, Chief Ministers and Legislative Party Leaders in various States present here would be able to provide valuable inputs for our discussions and decisions.

Telecom Deals

The winter session of the Parliament which ended yesterday remained deadlocked for nearly three weeks because of the government's stubborn refusal to accede to the opposition demand that the telecom deals be investigated by a Parliamentary Committee.

The manner in which the Communications Minister had handled the tenders relating to telecom basic services had bestowed a bounty on one particular firm and inflicted huge losses on the public exchequer.

Prima facie, it was a clear case of undue and unwarranted favouritism.

It is a significant comment on the tenure of this government that its term started with the Solanki Scam (the Bofors cover-up attempt at Davos) and is concluding with this Sukhram Scam.

Timing of Elections

The Rao Government's five year term ends in July, 1996. Some time back, the Election Commission convened an All-Party meeting to discuss when the Lok Sabha polls and the Assembly elections due in 1996 should be held.

The BJP favoured holding all these elections in February-March, 1996. Most other Opposition parties also made a similar demand. The Congress Party, however, expressed itself in favour of April.

I would urge the government and the Election Commission to confer with each other and make an early announcement in this regard. The present uncertainty must be put an end to, without further delay.

I gather that, acutely conscious of the Congress Party's pathetic plight in UP, the government is seriously considering extending President's Rule for another six months. There is no justification whatsoever for doing so. The BJP is strongly opposed to any such move.

The Election Commission has done well in declaring that the Lok Sabha elections and the State Assembly elections for West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Haryana will be held simultaneously. Uttar Pradesh was not included in the States listed, obviously because at the time this was announced, the proclamation imposing President's Rule in UP had not yet been ratified by Parliament. By virtue of Art 356(4) this proclamation shall cease to operate on 17 April, 1996. Let the Election Commission make an announcement of simultaneous elections for Uttar Pradesh also.

Developments in the pre-election year invariably influence the election verdict. Three elections and three judicial pronouncements have made 1995 a very propitious year for the BJP.

Victories in Gujarat and Maharashtra

The year started with Assembly elections in four major States. The BJP scored handsome victories in Gujarat and Maharashtra and took big strides in Bihar to become the main Opposition party in the State and increased its strength three fold in Orissa.

Midway through the year came the elections to local bodies in Gujarat. The party's performance was really spectacular.

In the last quarter of the year, came the third trial of electoral strength—the local body elections in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP won the elections hands down. The Congress was practically wiped out.

Three Judicial Decisions strengthen BJP's Position

Let me list the three judicial decisions which have been a sort of bonanza for our viewpoint. First was a Tribunal's verdict that the Government of India's decision to ban the Vishwa Hindu Parishad was illegal and void, and actuated by ulterior considerations.

Soon thereafter, came a Supreme Court verdict admonishing government for failing to discharge its constitutional duty under Article 44 for not enacting a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens. And, as the year is drawing to a close, has come the Supreme Court decision about *Hindutva*. The decision has fully vindicated our ideological position on nationalism in India being essentially a cultural concept.

The three electoral verdicts and the three judicial verdicts together have considerably fortified the BJP's position in the run-up to the next year's elections.

Three Developments Damaging the Congress Party

Correspondingly, three other developments during the year 1995 have irreparably damaged the Congress Party's credibility in the people's esteem.

The three events, between themselves, illustrate the three maladies which grip the ruling party, namely, corruption, criminalization and incapacity to look after national security.

The Telecom Scam has highlighted corruption; the murky Tandoor episode was an example of criminalization; and the impunity with which a foreign aircraft has been traversing right across this vast country of ours dropping rocket-launchers and other sophisticated weapons for internal subversion is a shocking evidence to substantiate our charge that the security of this country is unsafe in the hands of this government.

Even when the BJP was a marginal, peripheral party in Indian politics, it was the butt of sustained criticism, because of its ideology of cultural nationalism, of *Hindutva*.

Campaign Against BJP

But ever since we have come to occupy centre-stage and become the principal challenger of the Congress Party, the criticism has become converted into a campaign of calumny against the BJP, as a Party, and against *Hindutva*, as a concept. *Hindutva* is reviled as theocratic fundamentalism. Hindu-bashing has become a fashion in some circles. I hope the landmark judgement of the Supreme Court last week gives a quietus to this campaign of vilification and slander.

The Supreme Court has cited extensively from earlier decisions of the Court's Constitution Bench and observed that it is wrong "to confine" Hinduism or *Hindutva* "to the narrow limits of religion alone." The judgement adds: "...The term *Hindutva* is related more to the way of life of the people in the sub-continent. It is difficult to appreciate how in the face of these decisions the term '*Hindutva*' or 'Hinduism', *per se*, in the abstract can be assumed to mean and be equated with narrow fundamentalist Hindu religious bigotry."

Apart from spreading baseless disinformation verging on the abusive, our detractors are guilty of a central mistake. They overlook a crucial fact that the BJP is not merely a political party, it is a component of a national movement for the regeneration of India. The vision of the BJP does not encompass statecraft alone; it embraces the whole of civil society.

Let it be appreciated that when we speak of *Hindutva* or *Bharatiyata*, our concern is not just politics. Our focus is on the creation of an India which is at peace with itself, its past and its future; an India that is conscious of its future destiny; and an India whose citizens can traverse the globe with heads held high.

In such a mission, politics may be only a small part. But it is a crucial part. India today is being condemned to global irrelevance and is being taken for granted because its political face is disfigured and unwholesome.

BJP Plans an Indian Renaissance

The BJP aims at changing this political face, and putting some honour and dignity back into public life. This is not easy and we have to reckon with occasional setbacks. But an Indian renaissance

will never be possible if we have a government committed to elevating cynicism to a national philosophy.

The efforts of all the economists and multi-nationals of the world will not be able to achieve the tigerization of India if we lose sight of our ethical base, our inheritance, our *Dharma*.

We aspire for a government which will sweep away the cobwebs which obstruct India's creative impulses and which is resolved to create conditions which will energise India in all spheres – material and moral.

This is what our opponents fail to understand. Let them worship power; but let us deify India.

As we approach the general elections it is important that the BJP project this distinctiveness. We must not allow ourselves to be dragged down to the level of our opponents. We must raise the level of political discourse by taking it beyond politics. Let the people distinguish between their manifestoes and our vision.

Fifty years after Independence, let this be an election with a real difference. Let us go beyond the question: What kind of government do you want? Let the BJP's poser to the people be: What kind of India do you want?

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Hyderabad

20 March, 1994

The Bharatiya Janata Party was founded in April, 1980. In the very first year of the Party's launching, our National Executive held a session in Hyderabad (October, 1980). Today, we return here after fourteen years—a period during which the Party has grown spectacularly to establish itself firmly and indisputably as the national alternative to the Congress Party.

The growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party has been accompanied by a conspicuous erosion in the strength of all other national parties—the Congress, the Janata Dal and the two Communist Parties.

In the largest state of the country, Uttar Pradesh, Congress has all but disappeared.

The Janata Dal, which just three years back was ruling the Centre and in more than half a dozen states, is presently going through an agonising process of disintegration.

With the collapse of communism the world over, the two Communist Parties have lost all sense of direction. Inflow into the party has stopped completely. Senior leaders of the Communist Party of India in Uttar Pradesh have been defecting to the castiest outfit ruling the State. For Leftists in India, anti-BJP seems to have become the solitary safety-raft for survival.

BJP adds an ideological Dimension

For the Bharatiya Janata Party what is of even greater significance than the remarkable growth it has achieved is the qualitative change it has brought about in the nature of political competition in the country.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has succeeded in adding an ideological dimension to the electoral contest, and to political polemics. It is in a way resumption of a debate which gripped the Congress Party in the early years of independence, the debate that went on between Pandit Nehru's approach and Sardar Patel's approach to problems relating to national unity.

Indeed, if Pandit Nehru's approach in respect of Hyderabad State, had prevailed over Sardar's as it did in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, who knows Hyderabad too might have remained till today an unresolved problem.

For nearly four decades of Indian independence, Indian politics has been dominated by one single party – the Congress Party. All elections were a combat between the Congress camp and the non-Congress camp. In other words, elections were essentially a power struggle between the political haves and the political have-nots. Ideology was irrelevant to the confrontation.

The concept of *Hindutva*

The Ayodhya movement changed all this. This movement has precipitated a national debate on what is the content of Indian nationalism and what is the true meaning of secularism as conceived by India's Constitution makers.

The Bharatiya Janata Party believes that India is one nation and that Indians are one people. But, it also believes that the basis of India's oneness is its age old culture.

Hindutva has become a convenient shorthand for this concept of cultural nationalism of ours. *Hindutva* is not a mere slogan for us. It is the Bharatiya Janata Party's ideological mascot, the most distinctive feature of its identity and approach. It had been the hallmark of the party well before Ayodhya and will continue to be so even after a magnificent Rama Temple at the birth place of Rama in Ayodhya becomes a fact of life.

The Bharatiya Janata Party also believes that Indian secularism has its roots in *Hindutva*. India is secular because it is essentially Hindu. Theocracy is alien to Hindu tradition and history.

That the basis of Indian nationalism is our age-old culture has been acknowledged by numerous court pronouncements.

Cultural Unity

Delivering judgment in Pradeep Jain vs. Union of India (1984), the Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati and Justices Amarendra Nath Sen and Ranganath Mishra of the Supreme Court said:

“It is an interesting fact of history that India was forged into a nation neither on account of a common language nor on account of the continued existence of a single political regime over its territory, but on account of a common culture evolved over the centuries. It is cultural unity—something more fundamental and enduring than any other bond, which may unite the people of a country together—which has welded this country into a Nation”.

In the wake of recent Assembly elections, Bharatiya Janata Party’s adversaries have been talking gleefully about “the retreat of *Hindutva*”. No doubt, results of these elections did not measure up to the expectations of our supporters, or for that matter, to the fears of our adversaries. But the results were in no way any setback to our ideology.

Increased support to *Hindutva*

In these elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party has widened its support base considerably, polling one crore votes more than the Congress. In Uttar Pradesh, where the ideological battle was the most intense, our Party secured greater support than it did in 1991 when in the wake of the 1990 traumatic happenings at Ayodhya, the Rama issue had an exceptionally high emotive appeal. This only proves that the support for *Hindutva* has now become more entrenched than ever.

The politics of minority vote-banks has given birth to pseudo-secularism. Ever since Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee launched his movement in 1953 for the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India, we have been carrying on a relentless crusade against pseudo-secularism. The Ayodhya movement marks a significant breakthrough for our efforts. The Rama Janmabhoomi agitation enabled us to focus on *Hindutva* as an effective alternative to pseudo-secularism.

The breakthrough secured has to be pursued vigorously. There should be no let up in the crusade we have undertaken. The national

debate on what is genuine secularism. According to Bharatiya Janata Party, it means:

“Justice for all, appeasement of none.” The debate must continue and the people must be made more and more conscious of the fact that politics of minoritism practised by our opponents is undermining the unity of the country and simultaneously hurting the interests of the so-called minorities themselves.

Impact of Ayodhya Movement

The Ayodhya movement has had such a deep impact on the people that even our worst opponents have been forced to do some thinking. Anti-BJP-ism may continue to be the great secular consensus. But this is tempered with a grudging accommodation of Hindu sentiment. None of the parties talks any longer about reconstructing the Babri Mosque on the site.

For Bharatiya Janata Party, it was really a pleasant surprise to find government as well as other parties responding positively to our suggestion that Parliament adopt a unanimous resolution to let the international community know what is the nation’s bottom-line in so far as Jammu and Kashmir State is concerned.

The resolution finally adopted incorporates quite a few aspects that the Bharatiya Janata Party has been emphasising all these years.

Militancy in J&K must be Checked

For the Bharatiya Janata Party, it has been a matter of great pride that the task of leading the Indian delegation to Geneva was entrusted to Shri Vajpayee. Shri Vajpayee has earned kudos from the entire nation for the excellent lead he has provided and the manner in which his team defeated Pakistan’s bid to malign us.

The country, however, needs to be cautioned that Geneva only provides us a respite. Pakistan is not going to abandon its game of using international fora to keep slandering us. This will end only if we are able to contain militancy on the ground.

In this context, the reports from Jammu and Kashmir State are extremely alarming. Militancy has now affected the Jammu region also. And all that the Government of India does is to keep making periodical announcements about holding elections and restarting

the political process. There is a total bankruptcy of policy on the domestic front.

The Bharatiya Janata Party holds that all this talk about restarting the political process is meaningless. In the Valley today, what is needed first and foremost is to restore the administration and curb insurgency with a firm hand. If Pakistan's proxy war is to be defeated, its agents in the administration must be ruthlessly weeded out.

The Executive has before it four important tasks:

- first, to survey the economic scene in the wake of government's acceptance of the Dunkel proposals;
- secondly, to analyse the impact of the budget on the economy and more particularly on small scale industry;
- thirdly, to review the work done to mobilise people's support for the anti-Dunkel rally scheduled to be held on 6 April, (6 April incidentally is the foundation day of the Bharatiya Janata Party); and
- fourthly, to hear preliminary reports for the 10 states due to go for the polls during the next 12 months.

The National Executive, I am sure, would also like to hear brief reports of the political situation in various other States, more particularly, in States like Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Vadodara

8 June, 1994

I welcome members of the National Executive to this Vadodara meeting which is being held to prepare draft resolutions for the National Council Session due to commence the day after tomorrow.

This is the fourth time the Party's National Council is meeting in Gujarat. A session was held in Surat in 1982. The Council has met in Gandhinagar twice, first in 1986 and then again in 1992. Today we are meeting in Baroda, a city associated with the memory of two outstanding luminaries of modern times – Shri Aurobindo Ghosh and Dr. BR Ambedkar. Shri Aurobindo was a revolutionary, patriot and saint who urged his countrymen to accept rationalism as their *dharma*. Dr. Ambedkar, scholar and statesman, was a messiah of the Dalits and the principal architect of the Indian Constitution.

Poll Reforms

We had fixed these dates for the National Council Session so that this convention could be held conveniently sometime midway during the interlude between Parliament's Budget Session and its Monsoon Session. Towards the end of the Budget Session, however, government suddenly woke up to affirm that the issue of poll reforms cannot brook any further delay and so instead of meeting in July as usual for the Monsoon Session, let Parliament meet for a few days in June itself. As this Session has been summoned on the 13th, Members of the Parliament would have to rush directly from Baroda to New Delhi to participate in this Session.

Since the days of the Jana Sangh, we have been in the vanguard

of the public campaign for electoral reforms. A chronology of our campaign on this issue prepared sometime back would clearly bear this out.

Government's Motivations not Bonafide

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay was the first national leader to raise this issue at the Jana Sangh's Calicut Session in 1967. ShriVajpayee was the first to raise this matter in the Parliament in 1969. We are, however, sorry to say that the government's motivations in introducing the two bills this time are not at all bona fide.

One of the two Bills is a Constitution Amendment Bill. In the name of making the Election Commission a multi-member body (for this, no amendment of the Constitution is needed), this Bill aims at curbing the Chief Election Commissioner's independence and autonomy.

In the second Bill, a provision has been brought in to render null and void notifications issued by the Election Commission in respect of Identity Cards unless they have the prior approval of the government. By another provision, religion is sought to be banished from the electoral arena.

Election Commission and BJP: The Targets

Thus the two Bills are not aimed at poll malpractices. They are aimed, first, at the Chief Election Commissioner, and, secondly, at the BJP. Of course, there are several clauses in the Bills like delimitation etc. with which we agree. But the intentions of the government being malafide, the BJP is determined to oppose these Bills.

Poll reforms is a matter intimately connected with the health of democracy. It would be in the country's interest if legislation in this regard reflects a broad consensus in the country. The present Bills have divided the country, and do not reflect any such consensus. Reports of the past few days indicate that non-Congress parties, which earlier were supporting these Bills, are having second thoughts.

Need for Institutionalised Arrangement

In UK after every election, the Speaker of the House of Commons generally convenes an all party Conference to discuss the question of poll law reform against the background of the experiences gained in the preceding election. In 1969, when Shri Vajpayee first raised this issue in the Lok Sabha, he made a similar suggestion. I think it is the time an institutionalised arrangement be made in this regard so that poll reform becomes a continuing process and is not undertaken either for reasons of political expediency or by fits and starts.

The Dinesh Goswami Committee has made a concrete suggestion in this regard. It has recommended setting up of a Standing Committee of Parliament “to go into all electoral matters from time to time”. I would urge the Speaker to take an initiative in this regard.

Vande Mataram!



National Council

Vadodara

10 June, 1994

Mr. Chairman of the Reception Committee, Brother and Sister delegates,

I welcome you to this 15th Session of the Bharatiya Janata Party's National Council. We are meeting this time in Gujarat, and that too in the month of June. Both the venue and the timing of the Session have significance for India's recent political history.

It was Gujarat, this land of the Mahatma and the Sardar, which was the first to raise a banner of revolt against political corruption. Under the leadership of Shri Jaiprakash Narayan and Shri Morarji Desai, the people of Gujarat threw out the corrupt Congress Government of the State. This happened exactly nineteen years back—in June 1975. This was a major watershed in India's politics. It marked the end of what is commonly known as the 'Single-dominant-party phase of Indian Politics'.

Towards a two-Party System

In the two decades since, national politics has been passing through a period of flux, of intense turmoil. In the five Lok Sabha General Elections held since then, the Congress has won two, lost two and emerged as the largest single party in the fifth. It is, of course, still the principal party in the country, but its hegemony is over. It has virtually disappeared from the largest state of the country, Uttar Pradesh.

A very positive outcome of this period has been that for the first time, since Independence, there is now in both Houses of

Parliament a single non-Congress Party, the BJP, sizeable in strength to become the recognised opposition. Indeed, the tenth General Elections to the Lok Sabha have clearly given national politics the broad contours of a two party system, a development all well wishers of democracy have long aspired to see.

Meeting in Baroda today, it may also be pertinent to recall that this city is associated with the memory of two outstanding sons of Mother India – Yogi Aurobindo and Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar. A century back, at the request of Maharaja Gaekwad, Shri Aurobindo Ghosh came to Baroda, made this city his *Karma Bhoomi*, and stayed here from 1893 to 1906. This period became a turning point not only in his own life, but in the life of the nation.

Aurobindo and Ambedkar

It was here in Baroda that Shri Aurobindo gave a clarion call to his countrymen urging them to rebuild India on the basis of “spiritual nationalism”. It was here, again, that Shri Aurobindo put forward his concept of having *Bhawani Bharati* temples (Bharat Mata temples) all over the country. “The Shakti we call India, *Bhawani Bharati*”, said Aurobindo, “is the living unity of the *Shaktis* of three hundred million people, but she is inactive, imprisoned in the magic circle to *Tamas*, the self-indulgent inertia and ignorance of her sons.” Aurobindo described Nationalism as *Sanatana Dharma*. His entire thinking was such that today he would surely be denounced as one mixing religion with politics!

In 1917, the Maharaja of Baroda appointed Dr. BR Ambedkar Military Secretary of the State. Baba Saheb had just returned from the United States after obtaining a Ph. D. degree from the Columbia University. When he reached Baroda, not one among the Maharaja’s men turned up at the station to receive him! He was, after all, a *Mahar*, an ‘untouchable’. For the same reason for quite some time, he could not get any accommodation anywhere. He somehow managed to find a berth in a Parsi *Dharmashala*. But very soon he was thrown out from there too because of the same ‘offence’ – that he was born an ‘untouchable’.

It is these traumatic experiences of Baroda that only steeled the resolve of this great man and made him an uncompromising crusader for the cause of the Dalits. That concern for the

downtrodden, however, did not affect even a wee—but his total commitment first to the unity of India, and secondly, to democracy—commitments which stand out very sharply from the great Constitution Dr. Ambedkar has given to the country.

Amoral Rao Raj

The month of June has a more immediate significance also. This month, the Narasimha Rao government will be three years old. Looking back at its performance over this period, I really feel embarrassed recalling that I had once compared the present Prime Minister with Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri. Shri Shastri was the embodiment of probity and rectitude in public life. I feel sorry to say that these three years of Rao Raj have been the most amoral in recent times.

Moral Rot

Of course, India has by now become quite familiar with corruption and nepotism, crime and violence. Yet never have the authorities themselves patronised these evils to such a degree as has been happening lately. The late Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan would have described it as “the Gangotri itself becoming polluted”.

The biggest riot to tear apart any city in independent India took place in 1984—not in some small district town but in the capital of India. Thousands of Sikhs were butchered—most of them burnt alive—all in front of the eyes of the Government of India. The present Prime Minister was incharge of the Home portfolio at that time.

Ten years have passed since then. Not a single culprit has been punished. Every attempt made in the past few months by the BJP government of Delhi to bring the crooks to justice is being resisted by the Rao government. Under the Rao government it is the murderers who get special protection; and it is the bereaved families that are thrown to the wolves.

The moral rot really began in Nandyal. The managers of the Congress President’s poll campaign wanted their Chief to enter the Guinness Book of World Records. They do deserve full marks for trying. Mr. Rao got just under 90 per cent of the votes cast in Nandyal. The managers stopped just below ninety, obviously

because when any candidate gets 90 per cent or more in poll, the Election Commission regards it as *prima facie* evidence of rigging. When these days the present government shouts from the housetops about electoral reforms, let no one forget Nandyal of November, 1991.

Splits and Defections

Under the present dispensation, what has been done by the ruling party during the elections is bad enough. What it has been doing after the elections are over is far, far worse. In order to convert a minority government into a majority government, Mr. Rao has never felt constrained by any scruples or moral taboos. In fact, engineering defections has been developed into a systematic science. The Janata Dal, Telugu Desam, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Shiv Sena—all these were first split by the PM's emissaries, and then fragments of the parties seduced into the ruling party for a suitable price. Nothing to say of parties in the opposition, the Rao Government even tried to split its own ally, the AIADMK.

Only one other thing matches the present government's zeal for defection; that is its zest for corruption. Never in the history of independent India have so few looted so much from so many!

Mr. Narasimha Rao exposed his unwillingness to fight corruption when two years ago his External Affairs Minister visited Davos and handed over a note to his Swedish counterpart humbly requesting the Swedes to go slow on Bofors. According to the Prime Minister, he knew nothing about any such incident; according to the Minister, he knew nothing about the authorship of the letter; and they want the country to believe what they say!

Corruption Unlimited

But the recipients of pay-offs in the Bofors deal were amateurs compared to the scamsters of the Rao Raj.

The Bofors scandal may have cost the exchequer some sixty to hundred crores but when we talk of the Security Scam we are speaking of loot worth thousands of crores. And it was not just the brokers who made a profit, there were industrialists too such as Goldstar.

Whom to believe – Scamster or PM?

As a result of the Scam developments, the high office of Prime Minister was also dragged into the mud. It was really a sad day when pollsters went round asking the people whom they believed – the scamster, who had made allegations against the PM, or the Prime Minister? If the scamster was lying, why is he still a free man? – that is what intrigues people.

The JPC indicted half a dozen Ministries in connection with the Scam. Government promised to take action, and to present to Parliament an action-taken report on the JPC's findings within three months. Six months have gone by and yet nothing has happened.

Disinvestmet Scandal

Even before the Stock Market Scam, there was a disinvestment scandal. In the disinvestment of the Public Sector Undertakings, the people of India lost at least Rs 3000 crore. This is not my figure – it is the assessment made by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. This, certainly, is a lot of money, fifty times the kick-back on the Bofors deal. But who is responsible? Nobody knows. What action has been taken to ferret the guilty? None.

The current sugar situation in the country stinks, both of inefficiency at the top and also of corruption at various levels in the government. While the common man is reeling under the weight of exorbitant sugar prices, the bureaucrats and politicians involved are busy washing their dirty linen in public.

When it comes to the guilty, the Rao government is as silent as the Sphinx. Incidentally, 'Sphinx' is also the name of a finance company close to the powers that be.

At a seminar in New Delhi in 1984, the then Chief Election Commissioner, Shri RK Trivedi, warned that "Political corruption would continue to grow in geometric progression unless draconian steps are taken to eliminate chances of indiscriminate spendings of huge amounts at elections and thus remove dependence on money power".

Money-Power, Muscle-Power

The BJP has long been of the view that the roots of administrative corruption lie in political corruption and that political

corruption in turn stems from electoral corruption. As leader of the Jana Sangh, it was Shri Vajpayee who first raised this issue of poll reform in Parliament in 1969 and made government set up a Parliamentary Committee. The Committee submitted a valuable report in 1972. Several other such reports have followed. But government has never been inclined to move even an inch in this matter, except now after twenty years, and that too for patently ulterior reasons. Meanwhile, the country has witnessed elections degenerating into a competition between parties and candidates to decide as to who wields greater money power and mafia power.

Politicians became partners in crime when they began to use muscle power and criminals to win elections. In course of time, the history sheeters themselves entered the political arena and found place in the legislatures. In the process, a part of the police administration also got criminalised. With every passing year, the rot became deeper and deeper. In State after State we are seeing gangster-friendly governments getting into the saddle. It is shocking to know that the arch-criminals responsible for the horrendous bomb blasts in Bombay last year have had a close nexus with the powers that be in the State. While in some States, the criminal-politician nexus has serious consequences for social harmony and for law and order, in some others this nexus has acquired a dangerous anti-national dimension. No wonder, ever since Shri TN Seshan has embarked on a sort of crusade against electoral corruption, he has become an instant celebrity for the masses, and the bete noire of the Congress Party.

Targets: CEC, BJP

The two Bills proposed to be discussed in the Parliament Session due next Monday are not aimed at poll corruption. The real targets are: first, the Chief Election Commissioner, and second, the principal Opposition Party in the Parliament.

The BJP has always been in favour of a multi-member Election Commission. Reports of the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1972, of the Tarkunde Committee in 1974 and of the Dinesh Goswami Committee in 1990, have all commended a multi-member Commission. But none of them even considered, much less recommended, altering the present arrangement of Art. 324 to make

the Election Commissioners equal to the Chief Election Commissioner, which in effect means seriously curtailing the powers and autonomy of the Election Commission.

In the middle of 1993, government brought a Bill to the Parliament, saying that if any party invoked religion, or caste, or language, or race, in an election in a manner as to create dissensions among different sections of the people, the party could be deregistered. The Bill was later changed to omit the words caste, language and race and confine the Bill to religion, thereby making it obvious that the provision was intended to be used against the BJP, which had developed into a formidable challenge to the ruling party.

Anti-Religion Legislation

The twin Bills introduced in 1993 on the plea of separating religion from politics could not be passed. Now, the deregistration provision of the anti-Religion Bill has been smuggled into the poll reform Bill sought to be introduced next week. The BJP is determined to oppose both the Bills. It would, however, be worth while to reiterate the rationale of our opposition as articulated by BJP members in their Dissent Note on the Joint Select Committee's report on the two Bills.

Mistranslation of *Dharma*

Four decades back, Dr. Sampurnanand remarked to a friend that sometimes the mistranslation of just one word can wreak havoc on the thought-processes of a country. He referred in this context to *Dharma* being translated as 'Religion'.

The twin Bills sought to be passed in the name of delinking religion from politics bear eloquent testimony to the forebodings of Dr. Sampurnanand.

The Hindi version of the Bills invariably translates Religion as *Dharma*. Banishing religion from public life is bad enough, but the very concept of ousting *dharma* from public life would shock the average citizen of our country.

Yet, by the proposed legislation, any invocation of *dharma* is sought to be banned, and any allusion to the Mahabharata and the Ramayana – even *Ram Rajya* – to drive home a contemporary point

made an electoral offence. Had they been living, both Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo, not to mention Lokmanya Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, would have been transformed into political outlaws. For, what the government and its allies have contemplated is not merely a rootless India, but an amoral, even immoral, India.

Cultural Nationalism

At the root of their apprehension is, of course, the popular impatience with the politics of pseudo-secularism based on minoritism. But equally significant is the paranoia over the resurgence of cultural nationalism.

The basis of this nationalism is our culture and heritage. To us, nationalism has no meaning separated from the inheritance of the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Gautam Buddha, Lord Mahavira, Adi Sankaracharya, Guru Nanak, Maharana Pratap, Shivaji Maharaj, Rani Laxmibai, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand, Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jayaprakash Narayan and countless other national heroes. This nationalism is also our *dharma*.

The mess in Kashmir

One of the worst consequences of the Congress Party's distorted conception of 'religion' is the mess it has made of the Kashmir issue. Militancy continues unabated in the Valley, and, as a BJP delegation told the Prime Minister a few days back, spurt in terrorist activity in parts of Jammu region has touched off migration even from this region. This is an extremely disturbing development. The pathetic plight to which the three lakh migrants from the Valley have been reduced is really a disgrace for a government. Let this failure not be compounded by allowing a similar situation to develop in Jammu.

Kashmir – A Nursery of Indian Culture

For government and for most political parties in the country, the problems of Jammu-Kashmir State are looked at just from one stand point – that this is a Muslim-majority State! It is often forgotten that Kashmir is one of the greatest nurseries of ancient Indian culture, philosophy and ethos, and that there are centuries old civilisational and cultural bonds between Kashmir and the rest of India. The

people of India are never going to permit any compromise on this issue. Any compromise here can have a disastrous domino-effect on the unity of the country.

Resolution in Parliament

It is, therefore, that the BJP took a public initiative sometime back to have Parliament pledge itself to a no-compromise bottom line in this regard. We are happy that the initiative succeeded. We felt particularly gratified that the unanimous resolution on Jammu and Kashmir State adopted by Parliament emphasised the fact that at the root of the problem is Pakistan's aggression on Jammu and Kashmir State and its illegal occupation of one-third of the State, something that Government's stand on Kashmir had failed even to acknowledge till now.

Absence of Coherent Policy

The principal reason for Government of India's failure to stamp out militancy in J&K State is the absence of a coherent policy and lack of a unified command. At this session, we shall be discussing this issue at length and spelling out the steps we feel must be taken.

The Jana Sangh's movement on Kashmir in the early 50s and the BJP's movement on Ayodhya in the 90s are both manifestations of an identical approach, the party's commitment to cultural nationalism and its rejection of pseudo-secularism.

Integration with rest of the Country

Both the movements have yielded positive results. In the wake of Dr. Mukherjee's martyrdom in 1953, a series of steps were taken to integrate Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the country. The permit system was abolished, the authority of the President, the Supreme Court, the Election Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General was extended to J&K State. The national tri-colour, which till then could not fly in the State found an honourable place there. 1953, thus, was a landmark in the history of J&K. Those who talk about reverting to the pre-53 position are really wanting to obliterate all this.

Ayodhya Movement

So far as the Ayodhya movement is concerned, it is gratifying to find that in 1993-94, even the opponents of the Ayodhya movement acknowledged that construction of a Ram Temple at the *Ram Janmabhoomi* had become inevitable. No one talks any more about reconstructing the 'Babri Masjid'. In the past few months, the only aspect of this issue which our opponents talk about is that the Temple should be constructed by a Sarkari Trust and not by the *Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas*. The people will not allow this to happen.

State of the Economy

The economy continues to go downhill. The new economic policy, introduced with such fanfare three years ago, has ground to a halt. All the indicators are pointing downwards, all, save one, prices. The worst part of it is that the government seems to have no control whatsoever on its finances, a prime requirement for any purposeful development.

Industry is in the grip of a recession. The entire economic system, be it the capital market, the setting up of power plants or import of sugar, stinks of corruption, scams, kickbacks and scandals. While the government is rolling out a red-carpet for the Multi-National Corporations, Indian talent and entrepreneurship continues to be shackled, thanks to anachronistic laws and policies.

Prices and Jobs

The common man in India is worried mostly about two things, jobs and prices. The ruling party had promised in its 1991 manifesto to bring down prices within a hundred days to 1990 levels and to create 10 lakh fresh jobs. Prices have instead soared by over 50 per cent in the last three years, and in many cases, as in the case of sugar, doubled.

Double-digit Inflation

The country has already stepped into an era of double-digit inflation. Worse still, the prices of items of common use such as foodgrains, sugar, cotton, petroleum products and electricity have gone up by 26 per cent in the last few weeks. Eleven items account for 57 per cent of the overall increase in inflation at present.

No Jobs

As regards jobs, the less said the better. A large number of industries, most of them belonging to the small-scale sector, have been forced to close down, throwing thousands of workers out of jobs. The government has no funds in any case for new industries or new projects, and the scarcity of funds is so acute that the Planning Commission has slashed its growth target from 5.5 to 4 per cent.

Mounting Foreign Debt

The net result of all this is the mounting foreign debt which is now estimated at \$ 85 billion or over Rs 2,60,000 crore. Three years ago, when this government took over, it stood at Rs 1,24,000 crore, or less than half the present size. What has the government done with all the loans it has taken in the last three years? Where has the money gone? It has not gone into industry; for industry is in doldrums. It has not gone into agriculture, for investment in agriculture is actually declining. The money has gone into inflation and kept prices on the boil for three long years.

Liberalisation, not Globalisation

Ever since the new policy has been launched, BJP has stressed that the government seemed to be more keen on globalisation than reforming the economy and putting it back on the rails.

BJP had been asking for reforms in the direction of liberalisation long before the ruling party felt there was any need for it. Liberalisation means decontrol, deregulation and de-bureaucratisation. But we want our economy, weakened through long years of wrong policies, to be really strong before we go global. We are against precipitate globalisation with which today's government is enamoured.

BJP rejects Dunkel Proposals

It is for this reason that the BJP has rejected the Dunkel proposals. The philosophy underlying them goes against the very grain of our approach to international relations, whether political or economic. No doubt, the world is getting smaller and smaller and no country would like to operate in isolation or go it alone. But

independence in matters of decision making, both political as well as economic, is even more important; in fact, these are two sides of the same coin, the coin of sovereignty.

Issue of National Sovereignty

This is going to be a major issue in the years to come, and it is an issue that cannot be brushed aside lightly, certainly not by a party like BJP, for which national sovereignty is the very essence of its philosophy. The Dunkel issue and the multi-national issue, are not economic or commercial issues, a small matter of import and export, or financial transactions involving capital and technology. They are issues of life and death for India's teeming millions, issues that will decide in the years to come whether they remain a free people with their heads held high or succumb to international manipulators for the sake of mere survival.

The fundamentals of the Indian situation conflict with the basic assumptions of globalisation. Indian agriculture, cottage and small scale industries constitute three-fourths of the Indian economy – in terms of employment, production and exports, while it is large industry and high finance which is the mainstay of the Western economies. India has not begun to exploit its own internal market. The Western nations have virtually exhausted their own market and cannot survive without foreign trade.

Wrong Priorities

Foreign trade and foreign investment, therefore, is the life blood of the industrially advanced economies; but to India, foreign trade and foreign investment can only be useful supplements to national effort. Again, India is not a single commodity country like the Arab nations, Brazil or Cuba, and so needs foreign trade only as an additive, and not as the core of the national economy.

Our agriculture is capable of twice its current performance. It is a proven fact that wherever there is availability of water in India, there is prosperity and yet we have denied water to over half of our rural population. Our present economic policy strategists do not even think of these waterstarved millions; they are busy debating whether Pepsi Cola or Coca Cola will bring in more investment in dollars, or Kentucky/McDonald.

While globalisation is an attempt to activate the top few layers of Indian economy and await its effect percolate down to 90% of the Indian economy, what India needs is the reverse, the activation of the foundation of India by mainly Indian solutions as supplemented by ideas that might improve the Indian solutions. Here, the Indian is the core and the Western is the additive, the modern supplements the traditional.

Primary emphasis should be on Rural Economy

What India needs is, therefore, reversal of its priorities. The primary emphasis today is on urban industry and attention to agriculture is secondary. This approach will have to yield to rural-agricultural and agro-industries combination becoming the primary areas of emphasis. This is the foundation of our *Swadeshi* economics which has civilisational, political and economic dimensions and is not merely an issue of goods produced in India versus goods produced outside, as our critics have been trying to project.

Myth of World Market

A world market is a myth; this is really a game of the powerful. That is why Japan, despite being powerful, relentlessly and ruthlessly protects its industries. The same is true of the USA which passes special laws to prevent competition from outside and of the EC countries which enforce multi-fibre arrangements and similar methods of protection. Everyone wants the world market to sell to and not to buy from. Shri Okita, well-known developmental economist from Japan, explained how Japan developed itself by liberalising internally, but simultaneously providing protection to its indigenous industries. Without protection, he said, there would have been no Honda or Nissan in Japan; he also advised India not to globalise without allowing internal liberalisation its full role.

A bitter Trade War

Marrakesh Treaty has not legislated trade harmony; it has only prescribed ground rules for a relentless trade war in future. Peter Southerland, the Secretary General of GATT, says that the Dunkel Treaty is "the beginning and not the end of a bitter trade war." The heads of Japan, Korea and Taiwan apologise to their people for

accepting the Treaty. Why would they regret if GATT was good for all? But our leaders from the Prime Minister to the Finance Minister to the Commerce Minister to the Agricultural Minister are patting themselves for accomplishing a great treaty for India!

Why Globalisation is Wrong

Therefore, the BJP opposes the globalisation policies of the present government and also the rapidity and the mindlessness with which the government is going about the task, as if it were carrying out a command performance. The objections of the BJP are founded on unanswerable logic. They are:

First: Globalisation, which is in essence marketisation at the global levels, ignores the fundamental differentials of India as a civilisation, society and economy.

Second: It has no answer for those who fall outside the global market and, therefore, it has no answer for the foremost of India's problems – hunger, poverty and unemployment.

Third: It will result in a techno-economic coup because of the suddenness of the transition from socialism to globalisation which this country cannot absorb without surrendering its political and economic sovereignty.

Fourth: It is based on an expenditure-driven lifestyle while Indian economy is savings-driven and is based on conservation. In India, the householder is more a *Grahastha* than a consumer and prefers to save than to spend resulting in mismatch between the requirements of the global market and the healthy saving habits and conserving mindset of India.

Fifth: It does not activate the major sectors or sections of the Indian economy; in fact, it neglects them deliberately.

Sixth: It has created and sustained the myth that Indian development can be engineered wholly, and only, through foreign trade and foreign investments, thus undermining, and even ridiculing, all talk of national efforts as the core issue which can only be supplemented by foreign trade and foreign investments. It, thus, undermines the country's faith in itself.

The danger arising from globalisation is not limited to the economy alone. Over the past few years, the Narasimha Rao government has used the bogey of India being "isolated" to arrive

at shoddy compromises that affect both the economy and security interests of India.

The Prime Minister's recent visit to the USA was an occasion when a range of national interests were compromised for the sake of endearing India to the US. The sequence of events is revealing.

London Meeting-A Fiasco

First, a red carpet welcome was extended to a junior functionary of the State Department who had the temerity to question the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Union. So offensive was her presence that even the Union Home Minister had to openly admit that he would not have met her but for instructions from the very top.

Second, when the Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, arrived in India for his one-to-one meeting with the Prime Minister, he served notice that India must agree to a regional, non-proliferation agreement that would be brokered by Washington. The government virtually acquiesced. In Parliament, the Minister of State for Defence admitted that future Agni missile tests had been shelved. Indian negotiators were rushed secretly to London to negotiate the modalities of an end to the production of all missile materials. It is a separate matter that a vigilant press blew the secrecy and foiled the talks. What is important is that the Rao government agreed to negotiate with the US on this agenda.

Missile Tests Put off under US Pressure

And even after the London fiasco and the Public outcry over it, the government continued to bend before Washington. The Prime Minister's Office instructed Defence scientists to put off the trials for the Prithvi missile as a gesture of goodwill to the US. The Prime Minister admitted as much in the Lok Sabha without even a hint of embarrassment.

Paying A Price for Globalisation?

Is this the price we have to pay for globalisation? Does India have to surrender its security interests to attract foreign investments? Is our sense of self-esteem so low that even a hint of American displeasure can prompt us to go crawling for forgiveness? These

are not incidental questions. They touch upon our very existence as a proud, independent nation of 880 million.

Making India a Pushover

The question is: Do we earn respect internationally if we are seen to be a push over? And a push over is what the Rao government is turning India into. It is said that we have no other meaningful alternatives. We will never have any meaningful alternative, if we begin from a position of diffidence and despair.

National Interest should be primary concern

Of course, international opinion is important. But international opinion has never been a useful index in the evolution of India as a strong and vibrant nation. Had international opinion and the fear of isolation determined policy, would Sardar Patel have ordered the “Police Action” in Hyderabad in 1948? If international opinion had covered us, could we have reconquered Goa from the Portugese in 1960? No one of consequence sided with us then. And no one of consequence sided with us when Smt. Indira Gandhi gave the green signal for the blast in Pokharan 20 years ago. There was an angry outcry in the world against us even when Sikkim voluntarily decided to merge with India.

Excessive concern with International opinion

Hiding behind the fig-leaf of isolation and international ostracism involves accepting the line of least resistance. It is a recipe for the erosion of nationhood, and a willing acceptance of genuflection. If India is unwilling to stand up for itself, why should the rest of the world oblige? We have let the world know in no uncertain terms that we are a pushover. And, to imagine that this is the same India that castigated Krishna Menon for letting the jawans down in 1962 by manufacturing coffee percolators in Ordinance factories? Did such appeasement do us any good then? I doubt it will enhance our self-esteem now to pretend that delivery systems are technology demonstrators.

We need to find a way out of this depression and this mindset of capitulation. We need to overcome this specious fear of isolation.

Watch out Against Pakistan

Also, it must be realised that ever since its humiliating defeat in 1971, Pakistan has been systematically planning and preparing for another show-down. The low-intensity war it has unleashed on us through the ISI in the form of terrorist violence, bomb-blast, etc. seems only a prelude to something that can be even more grave, particularly when the government's response is as anaemic as it is.

India Must go Nuclear

Since its inception, the BJP has consistently advocated India exercising the nuclear option. Not so much because we think that India must scare and threaten its neighbours, but because we believe that neighbours and super powers must never be in a position to intimidate us.

Today, there is an additional compulsion: an arrogant and imperious superpower seems determined to draw India into its defence umbrella. Behind the non-proliferation initiative of the US is the unstated assumption that India must subcontract its national security to Washington, and all that India needs to do is to give the super power unhindered access to its markets!

The debate on nuclear arms and missile systems has been greatly shaped by western influences, mostly American, acting to serve their own national and even civilisational interests.

White World Supremacy not Acceptable

The white world, as a whole, is very much concerned about its own present and potential power. That is why they are so obsessed about the nuclear arms and missile programmes of non-white nations. Let alone India, even a country like Turkey, which is a member of the NATO, is not to be allowed to develop or acquire weapons that confer great power.

Exercise the Nuclear Option

We need to respond with firmness, with audacity and with unflinching national resolve. The BJP believes that an unequivocal commitment to exercising the nuclear option is the most fitting rebuff to all those who are determined to deny India its sovereign status. Such a move will not only commit the country to determining its

own national security, it will be a statement of India's right to its own self-respect and an assertion of its civilisational identity. India must stand up to be counted.

Nuclear Weapons – Ultimate Coin of Power

Shortly after the Gulf War, General K. Sundarji, former Chief of Army Staff, strongly emphasised that India needs the nuclear deterrent “to dissuade big powers from lightly pursuing policies of compliance *vis-à-vis* India.” He added: “The Gulf War emphasised once again that nuclear weapons are the ultimate coin of power.” General Sundarji has stated the stark truth. The country can disregard it only at its own peril.

Salutations to South Africa

Independence of South Africa, formation of a democratic government under Nelson Mandela and the end of the apartheid era is a momentous event of the year. The BJP salutes the people of South Africa and offer them its good wishes.

Meeting here in Gujarat, we cannot fail to recall with legitimate pride, the peerless contribution made by Mahatma Gandhi to this protracted and arduous struggle against apartheid.

At our National Executive meeting in Hyderabad, I remarked that *Hindutva* is the BJP's ideological mascot, a sort of bottom-line for policies and principles. The fact is that it is not merely the BJP that needs *Hindutva*, but the entire country which is in need of this ideological commitment.

The past four months have been traumatic for a number of reasons. Even if we are to wish away double-digit inflation and endemic corruption as predictable hallmarks of a Congress government, every sensible Indian has reason to be alarmed at the assault on the political system by forces inimical to Indian nationhood.

Attacks on Gandhiji have a Design

I refer in particular to the unseemly attacks on Mahatma Gandhi by parties and individuals who derive their importance from being a partner in a government supported by the Congress. When leaders of the BSP-SP coalition in UP attack Gandhiji and denigrate him as

a vile casteist, it is not just political adventurism, they are doing so with a definite design.

Gandhiji was a political missionary who realised quite early on that the nation was incapable of developing pride in itself as long as Hindu society was fractured and internally at loggerheads. Gandhiji saw Hindu consolidation as an inseparable part of national rejuvenation. Today, it is precisely that legacy of Gandhiji which is offensive to those who make a virtue of casteism and sectarian politics.

Casteism Rearing its Head

Make no mistake, what is being practised and preached by SP-BSP coalition and their ideological counterparts elsewhere follows a sinister design to undermine the very fabric of Hindu society, and to set an Indian against an Indian.

These politicians are unconcerned that the casteist passions they have unleashed have only contributed to greater misery for the weaker sections. In UP, apart from the fact that the general law and order situation has virtually collapsed, atrocities on Scheduled Castes and more particularly on women have increased manifold in the past few months.

Read against the background of the cultural dislocation caused by unchecked globalisation of the Indian economy, this form of divisive politics can end up reducing India to a mere geographical term totally bereft of a sense of nationalism and nationhood.

Commitment to *Hindutva*

It is in this context that *Hindutva* acquires a pressing contemporary relevance. *Hindutva*, as we in the BJP have consistently pointed out, is not a religion or a recipe for a theocratic State. It encapsulates the essence and core of nationhood. It is the cementing force that keeps the nation together. *Hindutva* is not merely a temple in Ayodhya. It is the collective wisdom of the Indian experience stretching over many thousand years. Addressing an AICC meeting in Madurai in October 1961, Pandit Nehru remarked:

“India has for ages past, been a country of pilgrimages. All over the country you find these ancient places, from Badrinath,

Kedarnath and Amarnath high up in the snowy Himalayas down to Kanyakumari in the South.

“What has drawn our people from the South to the North and from the North to the South in these great pilgrimages? It is the feeling of one country and one culture, and this feeling has bound us together. Our ancient books have said that the land of Bharat is the land stretching from the Himalayas in the north to the Southern seas.

“This conception of Bharat as one great land which the people considered a holy land has come down the ages and has joined us together, even though we have had different political kingdoms and even though we may speak different languages. This silken bond still keeps us together in many ways.”

The Silken Bond

Nehru did not use the word Hindu. But what he did identify unambiguously as the basis of India's unity - the 'silken bond' of culture is nothing other than what the BJP describes as cultural nationalism or *Hindutva*.

Hindutva, thus, is the ideal that links the past and future with the present. It is, in a nutshell, the Indian identity. In the name of 'secularism', politicians want the country to disown its identity. Without this identity and inspiration, India may as well not exist. *Hindutva* is more than a doctrine; it is the reality of our commitment to India. And no arbitrary law passed by vengeful Congress governments can wish away this reality.

Hindutva will remain as long as the Indian civilisation holds. BJP will ensure that the spirit of India, epitomised by *Hindutva*, prevails over draconian and undemocratic laws. This is more than an electoral plank; it is our mission. Let all delegates assembled here rededicate themselves to the fulfilment of this mission. That alone can restore to Indian politics the moral and ethical base which is being progressively undermined by the proponents of casteist and communal vote-bank politics.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Patna

15 September, 1994

Elections to Ten State Assemblies

I welcome members of the BJP National Executive to this Patna meeting. We are meeting this time just before yet another major electoral battle. This battle would be waged in two rounds; the first, two months hence, and the second, in which Bihar, the host state for this meeting would also figure, five or six months from now.

This time's poll confrontation would involve ten State Assemblies. Six of these have together a representation of 219 members in the Lok Sabha.

One of the principal tasks before this meeting of our Executive would be to plan, prepare and resolve to put our best foot forward in this mini-general election. In the past few years, the BJP has taken huge strides towards developing a bipolar polity on the national level. In the forthcoming confrontation, BJP has to exert to see that a similar crystallisation takes place in various States also.

Congress on Way to Political Harakiri

Thanks to the Congress Party High Command's dithering, the Mulayam Singh Government has earned a fresh lease of life. The Mulayam government has been under perpetual threat. Twice earlier, it has been brought to the brink by its own coalition partner, the BSP. This time, it has been an outside ally of government, the Congress Party, which gave the government some anxious moments, and to the people of UP a bit of hope and expectation. The UP State Congress demanded that Mulayam Singh's tenure be brought to an end, but New Delhi refused to

oblige. From a purely party angle, the humiliation suffered by the UP Congress in these past few days is of immense advantage to the BJP. Indeed, I hold that for the Congress Party, continuing support to the Mulayam government is a guaranteed pathway to political harakiri.

But, the cost the people of the State are having to pay, and the damage that is being done to social harmony, because of the continuance of this government is stupendous. The day this government goes, people would leave a sigh of relief.

PM's Significant Pronouncements

During the three months' interlude between our Vadodara meeting and this one, the Prime Minister has made two interesting statements. From the BJP's point of view, these are significant pronouncements. The PM declared on Independence Day from the ramparts of the Red Fort that the only aspect of the Kashmir issue which India can discuss with Pakistan is as to when it was going to vacate PoK, the one third of Kashmir it has illegally occupied. Never before in the past has government taken this stand.

The second statement I have in mind in this context, is the one which he made while addressing a Congress rally in Delhi. He said that a Ram Temple would be constructed at Ayodhya. He consciously omitted reference to the mosque he had been talking about earlier.

It is an open secret that the Shankaracharyas who have been invited to join the Trust being formed by government have been categorically assured by the government that the proposed Ram Temple would be constructed at the *Ram Janmabhoomi* itself where the idols of *Ramlalla* stand today. If and when this happens, our Ayodhya movement would have triumphed.

Validity of BJP's Positions

From the very outset, the Jana Sangh and the BJP have been severely critical of the Nehru-Mahalanobis model of economic growth and have been urging decontrol, deregulation and debureaucratization of the economy. Ours has been the only party advocating full fledged diplomatic relations with Israel. The entire country today accepts the validity of our positions.

The role of an opposition party in a democracy is to keep mobilising public support for its view-point on a certain issue until the sheer intensity of public opinion compels the ruling party to change its position. If government is unresponsive, then, public opinion contributes to a change of government itself.

BJP's Agenda Today: Country's Agenda Tomorrow

The BJP feels that as on PoK, so on Ayodhya, public opinion is forcing Government to accept the BJP stand point. It is only a matter of time before even on issues like Uniform Civil Code or Repeal of Article 370 or the Demographic Invasion from Bangladesh, or, for that matter, carving out smaller states like Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Vidarbha, public opinion would make the Congress party adopt positions which vindicate our stand. It is amusing to read comments that the Congress is hijacking the BJP's programme, as if this is something damaging for the BJP. Let us understand that BJP's agenda today becomes the country's agenda tomorrow, that is a matter of pride and gratification for us.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Bombay

17 December, 1994

Planning for the Next Round of Elections

The National Executive of the BJP was slated to meet at Nagpur in the last week of this month. But when the schedule for the next round of Assembly Elections was announced, and it became apparent that the issuance of poll notifications for various States would commence early in January 1995, it became imperative that the Executive meeting be advanced, and State units be allowed adequate time for selection, recommendation and finalisation of the party's list of candidates.

Therefore, both the venue as well as the dates of the Executive meeting had to be changed. I regret the inconvenience that has been caused to the members of the Executive as also to the State unit, more particularly to its Nagpur and Bombay branches.

A major poll battle has just ended. The Congress Party has been virtually decimated in two of the Southern States. In 1991, it was the Southern States that installed the Congress on the throne of New Delhi. And now, three and a half years later, two of these States, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, have unambiguously rejected the Congress.

The principal task before this brief meeting of ours is to evaluate the implications of this poll verdict and on that basis to plan for the next bout of elections.

Turmoil inside Congress

The immediate upshot of the Congress debacle in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka has been intense turbulence and turmoil

within the Congress party, and a fresh renewal of attempts to dislodge Shri PV Narasimha Rao from leadership, if not of the government, at least of the Congress Party.

The country is not concerned with the internal squabbles of the Congress party. The BJP regards the poll outcome this time as a powerful expression of no-confidence against the Congress party as a whole, and not merely against its leader.

For almost the entire week just about to end, the Parliament has remained paralyzed over government's refusal to reveal to the people the contents of the Gyan Prakash Report about the sugar scandal. The stalemate has finally been resolved by the government agreeing to place the report in the Library of Parliament. Parliament in a way has succeeded in bringing the issue of corruption in high places once again to the forefront.

Unfortunately, however, what happened in the case of banking scam has been repeated. The only minister to pay the price of the first racket was Shri P. Chidambaram, admittedly not in any way directly to blame for the scam. And now we have had Civil Supplies minister, Mr. AK Antony, tendering his resignation, even though he has a reputation of being one of the very few upright ministers in this government.

Three Grave Sins

The BJP holds the Congress guilty of three grave sins, namely:

- (a) compromising national interests for the sake of petty electoral gains, and in the process endangering the country's security;
- (b) compromising social interests for the sake of sordid political expediency, and thereby intensifying casteist and communal tensions; and
- (c) compromising economic interests of the masses in order to provide financial benefits to a select few, leading to all round corruption.

Let me give a few examples in support of my allegations.

Nadwa Episode

The Nadwa episode is truly shocking. Here was a foolproof case against ISI agents. On the basis of solid evidence gathered from militants who had been arrested in a kidnapping case of foreigners, the IB and the UP Police conducted a raid on the Nadwa College at Lucknow. Six persons were apprehended despite the non-

cooperation of the Institute. The State Government, however, forced the security authorities to set free the apprehended persons. Not only the Mulayam Singh government but even the Central Government has publicly apologized for the raid. And to cap it all, two officials of the IB and of the UP Police have been penalized for doing their duty.

It is, indeed, disgraceful that a legitimate action of the IB has been converted into a case of harassment against the minorities. All this for the sake of vote-bank politics. Mr. Molly publicly attributed Congress 'defeat' in Karnataka to Nadwa. It is really a mindset from which the Congress Party can never ever emancipate itself.

Only recently a serious espionage case has been unearthed in the ISRO. Pakistan's ISI and intelligence agencies of some other countries have been busy trying to ferret away valuable maps and chips of the cryogenic engine etc. ISRO has been trying to develop. Last year, the research wing of America's Republican Party published a well documented report on the growth of State sponsored terrorism around the globe. This report emphasized that Pakistan sponsored militancy in India was targeted not only at Kashmir; it was aimed at destabilizing India as a whole. The serial blasts in Bombay, followed by bomb blasts in Calcutta, Madras and elsewhere bore out the strength of this appraisal.

The present government's weak-kneed and ambivalent responses to all these activities makes it obvious that with this government in office, the security of the nation is in grave peril.

Uttaranchal

The Mulayam Singh government's war against the people of Uttaranchal continues unabated. The perpetrators of the Muzaffarnagar outrage continue to run this largest State of the country, where criminal and mafia gangs are having a field day. Neither the judiciary nor the legislature has been spared by the government's wrath. Physical assaults have been mounted on newspapers critical of the government. Mulayam Singh has been able to get away with all these crimes only because he enjoys the protection and patronage of the Rao government at Delhi.

Indeed, UP is a case where invocation of Art. 356 to impose President's Rule on the State is not only fully justified, but also an instance of where failure to do so amounts to dereliction of the duty cast on the Central Government by Art. 355 of the Constitution.

It is noteworthy that one of the alliance partners in the UP government claims to stand exclusively for the interests of the Dalits. And yet it is this State which has during the last one year been witness to the worst kind of atrocities perpetrated on Dalits, both men and women.

I demand that the agony of the people of Uttaranchal be brought to an end and the wishes of the UP State Assembly, expressed not once but twice, that a separate State of Uttaranchal be carved out should be conceded without further delay.

Liberalisation, Yes: Globalisation, No

The BJP has always been opposed to the Licence-Permit Quota Raj inflicted on the country by the Congress. We have, therefore, been protagonists of internal liberalisation, that is, decontrol and deregulation.

But in the name of liberalisation, New Delhi, has developed an infatuation for globalisation which, in a country like ours, cannot only aggravate our problem of unemployment, but also widen the chasm between the rich and the poor.

Baneful Consequences for Developing Countries

Paul Kennedy, famous author of *The Rise and The Fall of The Great Powers* has forcefully argued that while even for developed countries globalisation is not an unmixed boon, for developing countries, the consequences, would almost invariably be baneful.

In his latest book, *Preparing for the Twenty First Century*, Kennedy writes:

“If, say, a government is conscientiously attempting to provide better schools, healthcare, housing and public utilities for its citizens, by what means can it raise the necessary funds without alarming international investors who may be not at all interested in the well being of these citizens, but merely in their own profits? The rational market, by its very nature, is not concerned with social justice and fairness.” (Emphasis added)

A further consequence of globalisation, Kennedy adds, would be that “The new technologies (developed by companies of advanced countries) could greatly harm poorer societies, by providing substitutes for millions of jobs in industry and agriculture.”

The Dabhol power project of 2000 megawatts provides an example where the economic interests of the nation have been

mortgaged to an influential multi-national. The Finance Minister is known to have expressed reservations about giving any guarantees to the multi-national and, according to him, in this matter, the views of the minister concerned or the Prime Minister finally prevailed.

Nagpur Tragedy

How callous and insensitive Congressmen in office have become is grimly exemplified by the gory tragedy that occurred in Nagpur last month in which more than 110 innocent men, women and children lost their lives because neither the Chief Minister nor any Minister could find time to come and meet them, and listen to the legitimate grievances of over 50,000 Gowaris who had assembled outside the Vidhan Sabha.

Conditions in UP ruled by the Congress-backed regime are very bad. But the conditions in JD ruled Bihar are even worse. Casteism and criminalisation have been fully internalized by the Laloo government. Anarchy prevails in all walks of life. Education has been completely derailed. Employees are not paid salaries for months on end.

The examples given are illustrative of the rot that has set in. The overall situation in the country is actually far more alarming. The common citizen feels extremely worried and concerned over all that is happening, and longingly hopes that this is only a transitional phase.

Slide Down Irreversible

The slide down of the Congress is unlikely to be reversed. Looking at the manner in which the party leadership has been behaving after the current round of elections, the pace of decline may even be accelerated.

The developing vacuum has lately inspired talk of a conglomerate of regional and quasi-regional parties trying to fill this vacuum. The average Indian citizen, remembering how short-lived such coalitions formed in New Delhi have proved in the past, does not at all feel enthused by such a prospect. Those who are alive to the fact that there are forces abroad who wishfully look forward to India suffering the same fate as the former USSR actually dread such a possibility.

The situation casts an onerous responsibility on the BJP which

is gradually but surely establishing itself as the national alternative to the Congress. BJP's success in Karnataka is an important stride forward in this direction.

In the five States going to the polls next February, the BJP units are presently preparing their manifestos, spelling out the party's approach to the various local and state problems. This approach has to be dovetailed with the party's national outlook.

The key ingredients of this outlook are:

1. *Commitment to Cultural Nationalism* –
Our stand on National Security, Kashmir, Ayodhya, Secularism, Demographic invasion from Bangladesh, Uniform Civil Code, Hubli, etc., springs from this commitment.
2. *Commitment to Value Based Politics* –
Our crusade against corruption, casteism, criminalisation and vote bank politics stems from this commitment.
3. *Commitment to a self reliant economy* –
Our reservations about globalisation, our advocacy of *Swadeshi* and our resolve to move towards a Debt-free India have their roots in this commitment.

Friends, let our Word-Trident for the coming months be:

<i>Suraksha</i>	<i>Shuchita</i>	<i>Swadeshi</i>
(Security)	(Integrity)	(Swadeshi)

In the last few years comments about the BJP's approach have been oscillating between these two remarks:

“They are banking on just one issue – Ayodhya” and

“They have now put Ayodhya on the back burner”.

Let us not be bothered about these remarks.

Let not the first ever make us apologetic about our resolve to see a glorious Rama Temple constructed at the Rama Janmasthan and let not the second ever make us forsake the holistic approach the BJP has always had about the nation's variegated problems.

Vande Mataram!



National Council

Bangalore

18 June, 1993

Mr. Chairman of the Reception Committee, brother and sister delegates, and distinguished guests,

Let me at the outset express my deep gratitude to you, members of the BJP National Council, for the confidence reposed in me, and for having elected me once again President of this great Party. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi who proposed my name for this high office. Under his stewardship the party has made immense strides during the past two and a half years.

Unforgettable Memories

We are meeting today in Bangalore, and we are meeting in the month of June. For me, both the venue as well as the timing of this conclave conjure up deeply etched memories of the past. Eighteen years ago, that is, in June 1975, Shri Vajpayee and I had come here for a two-day meeting of a Parliamentary Committee. It was while we were here that the country was struck by a veritable thunderbolt – the Emergency. Our own scheduled stay of two days at the Karnataka Legislators' home was converted into a nineteen-month term at the Bangalore Central Jail. Veteran leaders of the nation like Shri Jai Prakash Narayan and Shri Morarji Desai were imprisoned. The RSS was banned. Tens of thousands of Jana Sangh and RSS activists were put behind bars. Fundamental rights of citizens were suspended; the press was muzzled; powers of the judiciary were clipped. By enacting the 42nd amendment, the ruling party sought to perpetuate this authoritarian set up. in which the Rule of Law lost all meaning.

Of course, when the people got an electoral opportunity in 1977, the perpetrators of all these crimes against democracy received their desserts. For the first time in the history of free India, the Congress Party was thoroughly licked, and there was a change of government in New Delhi. I feel proud to recall that in this momentous struggle for the restoration of democracy, the Jana Sangh and the RSS, and organisations associated with us, played a pivotal role.

I have recalled all this not only because of the coincidence of venue and timing but also because I find it hypocritical that this very party that had then brought democracy to the brink of extinction has been sermonising to the BJP for the past few months about the sanctity of the Rule of Law and Democracy!

Anti-BJP Hysteria

In the past few years, more particularly after the demolition of the Babri structure on 6 December, 1992, the country has been witnessing a shrill and often hysterical campaign against the BJP, the RSS, the VHP and other members of the Sangh Parivar. We have been charged as being vandals, lumpens, fascists and fundamentalists. No epithet has been too base for our detractors to hurl at us.

The hysteria has served a purpose. The outlawing of patriotic organisations, the dismissal of BJP governments and the harassment and arrest of party activists and sympathisers have hardened the resolve of the organisation and made us more mindful of the challenges ahead. Like the dark days of the Emergency, we have withstood the calumny and oppression with dignity and determination. This has without doubt endeared us to the ordinary people who are truly bewildered as to why it should be deemed a crime in Hindustan to stand up for a Hindu viewpoint and for nationalism.

Temple construction cannot be thwarted

Let our opponents realise one thing about Ayodhya. The campaign to construct a Rama temple at the birthplace of Rama in Ayodhya may have been initiated by the Sadhus, the VHP and the RSS. The BJP extended to it its full support. The campaign became a mass movement. Now, it is not just the aspiration of any organisation

or party. It is the resolve of the entire nation. Any attempt to thwart the people's determination is doomed to fail. I hope the recent Som Yagya fiasco at Ayodhya has made this amply clear to all concerned.

No doubt, by undertaking a vicious witch-hunt and flouting all norms of democratic conduct, our opponents have unwittingly done us a great service.

First, they have exposed their own isolation from the mood of the people. Slogans such as *Sharm Se Kaho Hum Hindu Hain* have contributed to widespread revulsion against organisations and individuals who make a virtue of their own alienation from society.

Second, the campaign of our opponents has reinforced the conviction that the BJP is forthright and distinctive in its approach.

A New Polarisation

In attempting to isolate us, our opponents have helped establish the parameters of political polarisation. Today, the division is no longer between the Congress and the anti-Congress opposition; it is between the BJP and the anti-BJP. We are setting the agenda; our opponents are merely reacting to it.

The Janata experience between 1977 and 1980 and the still briefer National Front experience of 1989-90 clearly demonstrate that it is not possible to construct a new India on the basis of a negative approach. Just as we should be clear in what we oppose, we should be equally categorical in what we espouse. The BJP is not merely in the business of contesting elections and forming governments. Of course, this is important. But what is of greater importance is the realisation that the BJP is a party with a vision of a new, resurgent and modern India. This brings us to the crux of our distinctiveness, the concept of *Hindutva*.

It is fashionable these days in some quarters to accuse BJP of being non-secular and injecting religion into politics. The point is worth probing. Yes, the BJP has consciously chosen to distance itself from the *sarkari*, vote-bank secularism that is being practised today. We have gone to the extent of calling it pseudo-secularism. The BJP does not believe, as Marxists unabashedly declare, or as other Marxism-influenced secularists hold, that religion is the opium of the masses and so the creation of an irreligious or a-religious society is the ideal to be aimed at. Also, we do not believe

that the process of national unity can be accelerated by having double standards, one for the majority, another for the minority; in other words, by promoting minoritism.

BJP Rejects Theocracy

The BJP is committed to the secular ingredients of the Indian Constitution: first, rejection of theocracy; second, equality of all citizens, irrespective of religion; and third, full freedom of faith and worship. Theocracy, we believe, is alien to our culture and tradition. In fact, we hold that India is secular because it is predominantly Hindu.

Total Equality before the Law

But history testifies that appeasement could not avert partition. In Kashmir, Article 370 has fostered emotional separatism which in turn created the groundwork for the present drift towards secessionism. If the unity of the country is to be preserved, total equality before the law is an essential prerequisite. This is no medieval dogma; it emanates from the most modern ideals of statecraft.

However, while even handed laws are sacrosanct in the creation of a just society, this is by no means sufficient. What is equally important is the strengthening of the national ethos which reflects the historical experience and the cultural traditions of the people and which, in the case of India, mirrors the innate oneness of the people. It is this *bhaavna* which we call *Hindutva*; not attachment to any particular form of worship or any particular ritual, but the aggregate of India's historical experience and culture. *Hindutva*, as we see it, is a shorthand for our commitment to the values, ethics and aspirations of this country – to the very civilization of Bharatvarsha.

Mismatch between State and Society

The BJP did not create *Hindutva*; we have rekindled it. This national spirit has been in existence from times immemorial. The BJP has merely used the undeniable reality of *Hindutva* to challenge a system which, while constantly looking outwards for its inspiration, refused to acknowledge the cultural underpinnings of

our national life. The pseudo-secularists in reality are wanting the country to disown its own personality. If there is despair and despondency in the country, much of the fault lies with those who for the past four decades or so have been attempting to steer India away from its natural value system. This has disoriented our people, imposed a mismatch between state and civil society and, consequently weakened our capacity to cope with both internal and external challenges.

Hindutva is not an instant panacea for the crises that have overwhelmed our society; but at least it establishes the moral and ethical base to cope with the assaults with a measure of self-confidence. We have seen the utter devastation wreaked on India by cynicism and rootlessness. The Congress party with its wanton encouragement of corruption and opportunism has sapped the moral vitality of our society and brought the entire country into disrepute. It has elevated manipulation into a governing principle of public life.

Proposed Law

Small wonder, the Congress now wishes to introduce legislation to outlaw religion from politics.

Religious bigotry is a malady which undermines social harmony. So does casteist and linguistic bigotry. The electoral law already provides sanctions against sordid, narrow-minded appeals made in the name of religion, caste, language etc. to secure votes.

Hindu Baiting

The legislation now proposed has nothing to do with cleansing of the poll process. Essentially, it is a desperate attempt to stem the advancing BJP avalanche. To the common man, this Bill would seem to be yet another, and a particularly perverse, example of Hindu-baiting.

Also, the attitude of most politicians to religion betrays a total inability to comprehend how deeply the Indian populace is steeped in religion.

We wish there was legislation to outlaw dishonour to the national flag, a law aimed at curbing indiscriminate fatwas, and another law against the misuse of the pulpit for anti-national

propaganda. But the Government and the 'secularists' turn a blind eye to these misdemeanours. Wittingly or unwittingly, their target is the ethical and moral codes which shape the minds of the people. This is what constitutes religion in India and which we would prefer to call *dharma*. Our culture and our national psyche are inextricably linked to this *dharma*. The leaders of the national movement, from Swami Vivekananda and Lokmanya Tilak to Mahatma Gandhi strove to inject these concerns into our freedom struggle.

Too little *Dharma*

It is a sad irony that in the centenary year of Swami Vivekananda's epoch making Chicago address and Lokmanya Tilak's launching of the Ganeshotsav as a powerful instrument of mass mobilization against British imperialism, today's rulers should be seriously thinking of legislation which seeks to banish religion from public life. Gandhiji once remarked:

"Many of my political friends despair of me because they say that even my politics is derived from religion. And they are right. For me, politics bereft of religion is absolute dirt, ever to be shunned."

— *The mind of Mahatma Gandhi* by RK Prabhu and UR Rao.

The problem with today's politics is not that there is too much religion, but that there is too little *dharma*. Restoring the imbalance is at the core of the BJP concept of *Ram Rajya*; a just state, a moral state and a strong state.

Minorities and BJP

The BJP is of the opinion that the politics of minoritism pursued by non-BJP parties has not only undermined national unity, it has also hurt the interests of the minorities themselves. It may have yielded some electoral dividends to these political parties. Some minority leaders may have thereby acquired political clout. But it has certainly not benefitted the Muslims who, as a community, continue to lag behind economically and educationally even after 46 years of independence, and more than 40 years of Congress rule.

The BJP urges the Muslim community to ponder over this harsh reality. Their interests would be truly served if they can do two things: firstly, emancipate themselves from the clutches of these vote

bank brokers, Hindu and Muslim: and secondly, concentrate as much as they can on education.

So far as the BJP is concerned, I would urge Muslims not to see us through the tinted glasses of our adversaries, but to judge us by our track-record. They would find that it is the BJP governments which have really been able to guarantee to all sections of the people – majority as well as minority – security, justice and equality, which is what I am sure the common Muslim really wants.

Poll Reforms Imperative

Since Jana Sangh days, we of the BJP have been carrying on a sustained campaign for electoral reforms. We believe that unless the election process is cleansed, public life cannot be cleansed. I remember the first policy pronouncement of the Rajiv Government – President's address to the Joint Session of the Parliament in January 1985 – in which the nation was promised "a clean public life". In specific terms, the President assured the Parliament that the government would soon undertake electoral reforms. Eight years have passed since then. Governments have come and governments have gone but the promise remains unfulfilled.

When the VP Singh government was formed in 1989, the movement towards poll reforms received a new impetus. An All Party Committee headed by the then Law Minister, late Shri Dinesh Goswami, was constituted. Apart from senior party representatives, the Committee included former Chief Election Commissioner, Shri SL Shakti. The Committee submitted its report in May 1990, and made a number of very valuable suggestions. There were divergent views in respect of two important matters: first, State funding of elections, and second, overhaul of the present electoral system. But a broad consensus emerged in respect of numerous other vital aspects of the problem. It is unfortunate that the Committee's recommendations have still not been implemented.

Goswami Committee

Some of the Committee's recommendations, which the BJP would like to pursue vigorously, are:

1. The Election Commission should be a multi-member body. Its process of appointment should be such as to obviate

arbitrariness on the part of the executive. It should have an independent secretariat analogous to that of the Lok Sabha.

2. There should be fresh delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies.
3. Multi-purpose photo identity cards must be provided to all voters; a time-bound programme for covering the entire country should be drawn up.
4. Effective steps should be taken to minimise the possibility of contest by non-serious candidates.
5. The Code of Conduct drawn up by the Election Commission should be given legislative teeth; violation of the Code should be made a corrupt practice.
6. Electronic voting machines should be used without any further delay.
7. The Representation of the Peoples Act should be amended to provide that only if a candidate set up by a recognised political party dies would the election be countermanded and not otherwise.
8. The law should be amended to impose a complete ban on the use of mechanically propelled vehicles like lorries, tractors, buses etc., to transport voters to the polling booth on the polling day.
9. The anti-defection law should be amended.

Electioneering, or the excuse of electioneering, is at the root of most political corruption in India. Grave doubts have been cast on the moral probity of several Congress governments, both at the Centre and in the States, wreaking havoc with the stability of their administrations. This should really be reason enough for us to take effective steps to free electioneering from the scourge of black money.

I demand that the Goswami Committee's recommendations be implemented without further delay; inter-party discussions should be resumed immediately in respect of the two important aspects on which there was no agreement, namely, public funding of elections and changing the electoral system.

BJP against Licence Raj

Long before the Congress latched on to the mantra of liberalisation, the BJP had been advocating decontrol, deregulation and debureaucratisation of the economy. We have been severe critics of the licence-permit-quota-raj which the Nehru-Mahalanobis model has inflicted on the country. For years, in our resolutions and policy statements, we have stressed the need for discipline in government expenditure, for exposing public sector units to competition, and for placing constitutional ceilings on national debt which has by now acquired ominous levels. We have repeatedly called for a new deal to farmers, who are the lynch-pin of our economy, and also for larger flow of resources to the States.

It may be in place to recall that it was in this very city some 24 years ago that the Congress leadership voiced some “stray thoughts” which really led our economy totally astray.

Congress Party’s Political Expediency

Unfortunately, for the Congress Party, economic policies have principally been a matter of political expediency. The nationalisation mania that we saw in the 70s had no economic logic. It was purely a political need. I feel tempted to say that even today when Congress leaders show their ardour for privatisation, I suspect that it is expediency that dictates their pronouncements more than any conviction.

Between nationalisation and privatisation, the ruling party has corroded the foundations of our economy. For them, if nationalisation was a licence to loot the public, privatisation is an opportunity to line the pockets of favourites! Just look at the balance sheets of our public sector undertakings and also look at the Comptroller and Auditor General’s Report on the PSU shares, where we have made a loss of Rs. 3000 crore. Of course, these reports are of little concern for the Congress Party whose spokesman only the other day emphasised that “financial irregularities are not matters of corruption”.

No compromise with Corruption

The BJP believes that the economy can thrive only in a corruption-free society. We also believe that the roots of administrative corruption lie in political corruption.

We believe in a decentralised economy. A centralised system is always more susceptible to corruption; it suits the corrupt politician, the dishonest bureaucrat and the power brokers immensely.

During the last two years, there has been virtually no growth and the economy is at a standstill. There has been a lot of tomtomming about the inflation rate having come down, but, for the common man, the sorry fact is that prices have increased by over 25 per cent in the last two years. Prices of foodgrains have gone up by much more, which means that the poor have suffered more than the rich. While the common man has to pay much more for foodgrains, farmers continue to be denied a remunerative price for their produce.

We were told that with the devaluation of the rupee exports would shoot up and the balance of payments situation would revert to normal. The rupee has been devalued four times in two years, and is now worth about half of what it used to be when the new government took over, and yet exports have shown no sign of improving. The balance of payments situation is as bad as ever.

To the common man, the only visible result of the new policies is the Security Scam. The country is awaiting with bated breath the findings of the JPC about this scam. The BJP, however, is convinced that while systemic failings, devious brokers, criminal bankers and dishonest bureaucrats have been responsible for this scandal, a racket of these dimensions just could not have taken place without political patronage. The country will not be satisfied until the corrupt politicians also are brought to the book.

Let's look within

India must aim high in order to reach for the stars. We have, as a people, all the attributes that can take us to the top. If we are still struggling, it is because our leadership has failed, not the people. We require a new approach; we require a sense of self-discipline, which only a party like the Bharatiya Janata Party can provide.

Let us not fool ourselves into thinking that our problems can be solved in Washington and London, or by the IMF or the World Bank. The destiny of a country of 900 millions has to be decided by its own people, not by outsiders. Also, we cannot permit any abridgement of our economic sovereignty. This is what the BJP's economic policy is about: help the hard working Indian people reach their potential by setting them free, with the government's role limited to creating a favourable economic environment for growth and development.

India's four Important Tasks

In ten years, we can change the face of this country if we work together or if we concentrate our energies on achieving the following four targets:

1. Enough water for every village, town and city;
2. Enough food for everyone;
3. Enough power for every factory and household; and
4. Fast, cheap and modern communication, including tele-communications, linking cities, towns and villages across the nation.

After nearly fifty years of independence, we do not have water, we do not have food, we do not have power, we do not have cheap transport. Crores of people do not have even the bare necessities of life: food, clothes and a roof. A bulk of these belong to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward sections. Linked up with this problem of ensuring that no Indian is denied his basic needs is the problem of population. This is intimately connected with the issue of education. The BJP will evolve and implement an effective plan which would integrate the family planning programme with other connected welfare programmes and literacy campaigns.

The BJP will see to it that at the end of ten years, i.e., shortly after we step into the 21st century, Indians will have all these basic requirements. Let the new century become India's century.

No Dependence on Others

The world no doubt is shrinking day by day. No country can afford to be isolationist. No country can move forward unless it keeps

up with the rest of the world. But no country can move forward if it has to depend on others all the time.

Let us, therefore, not be on the defensive. Government's impassioned advocacy of globalisation often smacks of diffidence and helplessness. If the world has something to offer to us we too have a great deal to offer to the world. Indians do very well outside India. Why can't they do as well, or better, in India. We cannot shut ourselves from the rest of the world but we have to be careful to see that we are not swamped by the world either.

To us, India's interests come first. And so do the interests of Indian industry – large and small. We welcome foreign companies in high-technology industries and industries requiring large amounts of capital. But they will be treated at par with our own industries and cannot be given preferential treatment.

Liberalisation must Precede Globalisation

The BJP is of the view that we should proceed first with internal liberalisation and much more rapidly than is being done now. External liberalisation can follow later and in stages.

The BJP believes in an economy where production is the index, not investment. Success should be judged by the results, not by the resources pumped in. Today, we crow over how many thousands of crores we have spent – but not what that amount produces. Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, once said, "Only 15 paise out of every rupee spent by New Delhi reaches the people". Incidentally, it is in this area that political corruption has its major operation.

To give a concrete example, India flares more than Rs. 2000 crore worth of gas every year. It really needs only Rs. 2000 crore to harness it. If we were to spend the amount that we burn up in a single year we get a return of 100 per cent, but we will haggle over a contract for two years ostensibly for securing a cut in rate, but in reality for a cut back. Thus, we will flare over Rs. 4000 crore of gas and claim that we have gained a reduction of Rs. 40 crore in our contract.

There has to be accountability for the Manager – be it politician, bureaucrat or technocrat.

Let's not neglect small Industries

It is regrettable that the advent of the much publicised 'Economic Reform Package' has been accompanied by an attitude of conspicuous neglect towards small industries.

A recent study by the *Economist* of London has brought out the fact that all over the world large industries are yielding lesser productivity and profitability. In contrast, small industries are proving to be more viable. The backbone of the German economic miracle is some 300,000 small scale units which account for over 2/3rd of Germany's GDP. The same is true of Japan which is a remarkable example of miniaturization of economy through micro-electronics and a contrast to large scale units.

In India too, small scale units – tiny sector, handloom and village industries – account for over 40 per cent of the GDP, employ over 32.5 million people as against a mere 7.4 millions by large industries in the private sector and a mere 2.3 millions in the public sector. During 1989-90, the small scale industrial units accounted for direct export of Rs. 9000 crore out of the total exports of about Rs. 30,000 crore. These figures do not include remittances from our carpenters, masons and other skilled hands from abroad, which added up to 21 billion dollars during the decade 1981-1990. Indian goldsmiths earn a gross foreign exchange of 4 billion dollars for India – more than all multi-nationals and big industrialists of India put together. This is not an accident of one year but happens year after year. This shows where our strength lies, untapped. It is in tapping these skills that our success to produce, to employ, to export, and to prosper, lies.

Sage Counsel from Japan

How then do we combine the traditional with the modern? This problem was faced by many nations at important points in their history – notably Japan.

How did Japan link the traditional with the modern sector? This is how Prof. Takeshi Hayashi, Faculty of International Relations, Daito Bunka University, Japan, summarised what Japan did:

"The traditional artisan does not have the training by which he could teach in a University since his craft does not have that kind of a theory. It is more in the nature of passing on of experience.

But with the help of modern engineers they can be mobilised in a way so as to help the newly emerging manufacturing processes. How does one combine the traditional and the modern? In our case, we have been very selective in where and how modernity is to be employed. For example, in the case of textiles, only spinning has been mechanised, not weaving. Weaving was left in the hands of the traditional artisans. Modern technology cannot wipe out traditional skills and traditional artisans. Both of them went together hand in hand.”

When it came to advising what other developing nations could do, he criticised the Western view of universalism of its prescriptions and advised each nation to work out its destiny. He adds:

“We have a lot of admirers of the West. We have always had them. In my own thinking, the West deserves admiration to the extent that they solve their own problems. But it is different when these ideas and models are thrust on others as universalist thinking. It is Euro-centric universalism – that is all.

“I know there is lot of interest, particularly in the developing nations, to find out how Japan achieved its success and whether other nations can also achieve similar success by following similar policies. While the Japanese experience might provide certain interesting insights, I think there is no way it can be duplicated. It is in that sense quite unique, brought about by factors that are quite specific to the Japanese civilization and culture, as well as a set of historical circumstances therein obtaining. Developing nations of today will have to work out their own unique paths, paths that are consistent with their own unique cultures and civilizations. I am afraid, it is not an easy task”.

Thus, India will have to work out its own path: it cannot become a carbon copy of the West. Each nation and its people have their own aim of life.

The *Swadeshi* Concept

To the extent there is commonality of objective, the pattern of life, habits and needs will be common – and so will be the need for a common technology.

It is the duty of each nation to decide its own course on the basis of the extent of commonality with the developing nations. This

judgement and decision-making is '*Swadeshi*' – that is, the national mind which decides and discriminates on what it needs for itself and what it needs to do for preserving and fostering the comonality that makes the global village.

The concept of *Swadeshi* does not mean exclusive use of goods produced in India. It is an attitude of mind that emphasises largely local living – mentally and physically – with trans-country commerce based on mutual need. It does not betray any sense of inferiority – complex *vis-a-vis* the developed countries. It also incorporates the objective of making Indian economy debt-free.

Addressing this session in Karnataka, it would be in place to mention that it was in the old Mysore State that modern technology made its early appearance. The first hydro-electric power house in the country came up in Mysore. The name Akashwani was given to the first broadcasting station opened in Mysore in 1935. It was later adopted by the whole country.

Indeed, Mysore in Karnataka has been in the vanguard of the modernisers in modern India. It is here that we have the most beautiful gardens in the country, the Vrindaban Gardens.

Horticulture, Aforestation

Talking of gardens, I wish our policy makers realised the immense export potential there is in horticulture. The total world export trade in flowers is around \$14 billion. Our own share is negligible. This is in spite of the fact that we have year-round sunshine.

India has a total land area of 329 million hectares, out of which 64 million hectares is forest land. The actual forest cover is on 36 million hectares and the balance 28 million hectares is degraded forest requiring immediate replanting. Besides, 107 million hectares of waste land is also available. We have thus sizeable land available for aforestation.

The BJP favours drawing up a comprehensive scheme for aforestation. This would provide gainful employment to millions, help eradicate poverty, arrest further creation of waste land and desert and thus improve the ecological balance and environment which has now become global concern.

When I began my observations on the state of the economy, I

had recalled that this was the city where two and a half decades back certain policies were articulated under the label of 'stray thoughts', which really derailed the economy.

Let our Party's deliberations at Bangalore indicate the direction which would put India's economy back on the rails.

Dangerous Situation in J&K State

In Jammu and Kashmir State, the government has been a mute spectator to a vicious 'ethnic cleansing' that has resulted in nearly 2.5 lakhs of Hindus becoming refugees in their own country.

The emerging reality is that India is being gradually encircled by a hostile Islamic fundamentalist arc which, besides being a security threat, is a civilizational challenge as well. The secessionist insurgency in Kashmir is not merely Pakistan's ploy to complete the "unfinished business of 1947". It is an aspect of a wider assault launched by the fundamentalist forces. It is, for example, no accident that among the so-called Mujahideen terrorists in the Kashmir valley are Pakistanis, Afghans and Sudanese. I would urge the government to reflect upon the significance of the recent OIC resolutions that equate the turmoil in Kashmir with the happenings in Palestine and Bosnia.

It is painfully apparent that discredited formulae centred on propping up puppet regimes, increasing the quantum of autonomy and appeasement of secessionists are not going to arrest the downward slide in Kashmir. It is wishful thinking to believe that Pakistan can somehow be persuaded to abandon its support to the terrorists in the valley. Pakistan is unlikely to show any restraint specially when they think they are winning.

Mobilising international opinion is obviously a priority and I commend the government for initiating diplomatic ties with Israel, the country which has a long experience of fighting fundamentalism and terrorism. India can profit from Israel's successful experience.

Article 370 must Go

However, outside support is no substitute for putting our own house in order. Ever since Jagmohan was peremptorily removed as Governor by a callous VP Singh government, successive regimes have been allowing the situation in the valley to deteriorate, so much so that Doda district is now threatened by a fresh exodus of Hindus.

In the factional war between the Union Home Minister and his Minister of State, the casualty has been the country.

The BJP has been consistent in demanding the repeal of Article 370 which entered the Constitution as a temporary provision. Events have vindicated our belief that the so-called special status, far from facilitating the integration of Jammu and Kashmir, has acted as an emotional and legal barrier to national unity.

The BJP demands that effective steps be taken for the immediate rehabilitation of all those who have been dispossessed from their own homes, irrespective of whether they are Hindus or Muslims. The government has been callously negligent about this issue only because the overwhelming majority of these are Hindus. The situation demands that ex-servicemen be specially drafted to settle in the Valley and create a new Indian security zone. To us, the unity of Bharat Mata is more important than an archaic Article 370 which has lost all its rationale.

Demographic Invasion

Swami Vivekananda once wrote of “the patient Hindu, the mild Hindu”. He was referring to the country’s infinite resilience and its infinite willingness to take adversity in its stride. Far from seeing this as a cherished attribute, the Congress Party has equated these characteristics with weakness. The Hindu is being taken for granted, the society is being taken for granted and the nation is being taken for granted. We have seen this in Kashmir. We have seen this in permissive attitudes which have allowed over 10 million Bangladeshis to swamp the country and effect a silent demographic transformation. We are also seeing it in the casual attitude of government towards the security of the citizens.

Criminalisation of Politics

The series of bomb blasts in Bombay on 12 March, 1993, which killed nearly 500 innocent civilians, was a national shame. It exposed the fragility of our internal security and alerted us to a fifth column operating from within with the full and active connivance of Pakistan. Even after the lapse of three months, government has failed to apprehend the principal culprits.

A major factor that has contributed to this situation is the criminalisation of politics that has been going on in this country, more particularly in the last one decade. The problem cannot be solved unless the nexus presently subsisting between the political bosses and the mafia bosses is snapped.

The facts that have come to light following the Bombay and Calcutta blasts reveal that both the Congress Party and the Marxist Party are immersed neck-deep in this racket, and so possess neither the will nor the capacity to deal with the problem.

Drift to Anarchy

The matter is truly serious because the security of the country and the security of the citizens have become inter-linked. In 1984, the Congress, in its infamous advertisement campaign asked the people whether they would like the country's borders to be brought to their doorsteps. The Congress even received an overwhelming mandate to check the process. They have squandered the goodwill; they themselves now stand guilty of having actually brought the country's borders to the doorsteps of the average citizen. Through their laxity and lack of scruples they have converted the whole of India into a front line. The Congress can no longer be trusted with the onerous responsibility of safeguarding the lives and property of its citizens.

The people's patience is wearing thin and the government remains completely unmoved. It observes silently as threats are issued from the Milli parliament in Delhi calling upon Muslims to take up arms. It prefers to look the other way as a secessionist leader hijacks the pulpit of the Hazratbal Masjid on Eid day and calls for secession. And threatened with the loss of a valuable vote-bank, it responds by declaring Friday a school holiday in Kerala. It is not merely shameful, it is obscene.

No wonder our enemies laugh at us. They know that with this government they will be able to deal with an emasculated India and a government preoccupied with a one point agenda: to ensure its survival at all costs.

The BJP shares the concern of the people at this alarming drift to anarchy. We aim to make the security of the country and the

security of the citizen a prime concern. We will not allow India to be taken for granted any longer.

End of Cold War: Implications for India

India's foreign policy framework was based primarily on three hard facts: the cold war between the USA and the USSR, an enduring relationship with the USSR which suited both parties, and the fluctuating relations with the United States who stood committed to Pakistan because of a perception that it was a dependable bulwark against the spread of communism.

The situation, however, has undergone a total change. Since 1989, an accelerated dissolution of the cold war situation and the disappearance of one of the power blocs has rendered the international situation considerably more complex. There was an inherent restraint and predictability in the earlier situation; this has now been replaced by uncertainties and a considerable measure of confusion. A new era of global peace has not dawned; and acute regional disparities and fierce territorial conflicts persist. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union, the ethnic battles being waged in Yugoslavia, the unsettled aspects of the tidying up process in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the near civil war situation in Afghanistan, the protracted fighting in Somalia and Cambodia and the sullen uncertainties of West Asia have really complicated the situation.

Challenges before Indian Policy Making

The challenge to Indian policy making, in the realm of international affairs, is three-fold:

1. to speedily recognise the altered realities of today and to realign India's foreign policy;
2. to harmonise internal and external policy articulations, and the conduct of our diplomacy, so as to secure for India its rightful place and role in the comity of nations; and
3. to address itself to the vital need for such South Asian initiatives as would establish beneficial bilateral relations with all our neighbours, thus enabling this vast reservoir of humanity to free itself from the crippling thralldom of poverty and want.

Relations with China and Pakistan

The BJP stands for bilaterally beneficial and mutually cordial relations with all our neighbours. We would, therefore, like to work for a resolution of all the inherited obstructions in the path of lasting amity and co-operation with the Peoples Republic of China. We are aware that this is not easy particularly because of three factors: first, the contentious border issue, secondly, China's continuing support in terms of military technology and hardware to Pakistan, and lastly, the Indian people's concern about the effacement of Tibet's Buddhist identity. We feel, nevertheless, there is need to exert consciously to improve relations with China so that either we are able to resolve the areas of conflict, or at least to contain them.

The conflict with Pakistan has been endemic since these two nation states were created by the British in 1947. It is an unfortunate fact of history that on two occasions in the past when Pakistan committed aggression on our country and was brought to heel by our armed forces, we allowed the opportunity to slip out of our hands and failed to convert those victories into permanent peace by making Pakistan agree to a final settlement of the Kashmir problem.

For the last several years, Pakistan has been striving systematically to subvert the unity of our country by aiding and abetting insurgency and terrorist activities in various parts of India, more particularly in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. While we are conscious that the welfare of the peoples of this sub-continent cannot be held to perpetual ransom of discord among neighbours, peace can be achieved only if we are able to spike effectively Pakistan's mischief within our own country and make it realise that this adventurism can prove costly for it.

Global Democracy

We recognise the crucial importance of the USA in the evolving international order. It would be our endeavour to erase the inherited mutual prejudices of yesteryears and to develop with the USA a mutually beneficial relationship based on commonly accepted principles and perceptions.

The BJP acknowledges the need for an equitable international economic order based on a global environmental consensus and sustainable development. But the global divide between the 'haves'

and 'have nots', between resource and production, and between poverty and plenty, has to be eradicated. That is the new global democracy to which we will address ourselves. In harmony with this objective, there is also need to work for reform of United Nations.

Nuclear Policy

The end of the cold war has not resulted either in the end of nuclear weapons as such, or of nuclear threats to nations. Globally, there has been some welcome movement forward; regionally, however, the problem of proliferation has got aggravated. With Pakistan self-declaredly a nuclear weapon state, given the reality of a nuclear Peoples Republic of China and the aspirations of some nations in the Gulf, and the turmoil and uncertainty within the Commonwealth of Independent States, India has to address itself to this question principally as one of national security concerns. We cannot acquiesce in any effort to 'contain India'. Our policy in this regard is dictated by continuity and more so, by a need for deterrence against aggression.

BJP's Four-Point Formulation

I present, therefore, a four point formulation as the basis of the party's nuclear policy:

1. The BJP shall not compromise on national sovereignty and national security.
2. The BJP subscribes to the principle of a comprehensive, universal and non-discriminatory treaty of non-proliferation. BCW (Biological Chemical Warfare) agreements are a useful model to emulate. The party will, however, encourage an embargo on any further testing of nuclear weapons globally.
3. The BJP would be willing to explore the articulation of a "no first use" statement. Simultaneously, we would examine constructively all aspects of co-operative security. extension of other confidence building measures and the laudable goal of nuclear restraint in the entire region— Central, South, West and East Asia.

4. We hold that India cannot abjure its peaceful missile development programme.
In this context, the BJP feels that government should clearly define India's nuclear status. Former Chief of Staff, General K. Sundarji has already advocated this approach.

Five Prime Ministers and Five Reasons

In the last 16 years, the country has seen five Prime Ministers being ousted from power. In each case one single principal factor accounted for the ouster.

Smt. Indira Gandhi had to quit because she sought to subvert democracy. The people could not forgive the Emergency.

Shri Morarji Bhai Desai's government was punished because the electorate refused to tolerate the fierce infighting of the Janata Party.

Shri Rajiv Gandhi had to go because of Bofors which in the eyes of the people became a glaring example of corruption at high levels.

Shri VP Singh invited nemesis for himself by opposing the Ayodhya movement and by shamelessly pursuing the politics of vote banks.

Shri Chandra Shekhar fell because his Congress allies suspected him of snooping and surveillance.

For each of these Prime Ministers, one factor proved sufficiently lethal.

Rao's Vulnerability

It is interesting to note that within a short span of two years, Shri PV Narasimha Rao made himself vulnerable to all these five factors.

Assault on Democracy

Shri Rao may not have clamped a formal Emergency on the country but the actions his government has taken after 6 December, 1992 have been arbitrary, highhanded and thoroughly undemocratic. Several of these actions, such as dismissal of the BJP Government in Madhya Pradesh, and outlawing the RSS, have been struck down by court as unconstitutional. Court after court has admonished the

government for its lawless actions in so far as arrest of party leaders and MPs and sealing of RSS and VHP offices are concerned.

Civil War within Congress

The Congress Party today is virtually in the clutches of a civil war. Cabinet Ministers have been publicly denigrating the Prime Minister. Senior and Junior Ministers in the same departments have been working at logger heads. The raucous scenes at Surajkund AICC Session, make the Janata inflighting seem pale and unexciting.

Corruption

It is in these two years that the country has seen the biggest scandal since independence, the Stock Scam. Grave allegations have been appearing in the press in respect of the kith and kin of the country's chief executive. The nation felt really outraged when the Congress Party brazenly compromised with corruption and, during the impeachment debate in the Lok Sabha, bailed out Justice Ramaswami who had been indicted by a three Judge Committee.

Ayodhya and Vote Bank Politics

So far as the Ayodhya issue is concerned, PV has revealed himself to be as hostile to the movement as VP. Like VP, his sole concern in such matters has been vote-bank politics. Little wonder, the country has witnessed under his aegis opportunistic gimmickry of the worst kind from Friday holidays in Kerala to the Soma *Yagya* in Ayodhya.

Snooping on Colleagues

During this year's Budget Session of the Parliament, the HRD Minister alleged that his telephone was being tapped and that his activities were under surveillance by this government.

When the Congress government assumed office in June 1991, it did not have a majority but it did have a mandate. Today, exactly two years later, the Congress has manipulated a majority (by splitting the Janata Dal and the TDP) but its mandate has evaporated. I am sure it realises this, but I also wish it acknowledges this and seeks a fresh mandate from the people.

BJP can Deliver Goods

We feel proud that in the four BJP ruled States we were able to deal with mafia gangs and criminals. In UP, where before Kalyan Singh took office every year there used to be scores of communal riots, Kalyan Singh's 18 month tenure was riot-free. We are also happy that these four States faced criticism of various kinds, but there were no charges of corruption; the standard of integrity and probity among the Ministers was acknowledgedly high.

On the basis of our experience and track record, the BJP is confident that if the people reposed trust in us at the national level, we would succeed in making society riot-free, the administration corruption-free, the economy debt-free and elections violence-free.

World is watching Us

Fellow delegates at this National Council Session, I am sure all of you realise that in the past few months, the hopes and expectations of the people from the BJP have multiplied manifold. Precisely because of the successes we have scored, precisely because we are now looked upon as the prospective government, everything we say and do is bound to be scrutinised minutely; in fact, as the length to which many friends have gone to tarnish us shows, our conduct must be exemplary not just by ordinary standards. It must be so good that it is beyond misrepresentation.

Rapid growth has itself meant that persons of diverse background have got attracted to the party. This is a sign of health and vigour, but in the case of a party whose claim is that it is a party with a difference, rapid expansion is also a reason for redoubling our efforts to make sure that the party's norms and values are not diluted.

Self-Purification should be our Motto

In the coming months, many are bound to feel, "Soon the party is going to be in power; I must put myself in a position of vantage so that I can take advantage of power when it comes". That temptation will be fatal; it will destroy in the eyes of the people our claim of being different. And should we come to power and our members proceed to "take advantage" of it, not only will the party be damaged, the great causes it has taken up will be jeopardised. The BJP is a

national political party. Our legitimate goal is to form the government in New Delhi. The way is not by manoeuvre and intrigue. The way is by self-purification. Heed the *Dhammapada*: “As the silversmith removes impurities from silver, so the wise man from himself: one by one, little by little, again and again”.

The Task Ahead

For the BJP, the objective is the happiness and glory of the Indian people. Political power is only an instrument to achieve this goal.

Today, the Congress Party is rapidly hurtling downwards. With the collapse of communism the world over, the Marxist parties have lost their way. The Janata Dal is in tatters. Ironically, the only incentive for their sporadic exertions is the BJP. In this developing vacuum, the BJP is viewed by many as a natural choice.

We, however, do not wish to be the people’s choice only by default. After all, we are not aiming just at success in elections; we are aiming at success in governance. The task before the party, therefore, is three fold: to widen its support base, to draw up a sound and comprehensive policy framework for government, and lastly, by our conduct even while we are in the Opposition, to instil confidence in the people that this is truly a party with a difference.

The people have high hopes in us; we shall not let them down.

Vande Mataram!



National Executive

Jaipur

31 July, 1993

Congress Party exposed

The first week of the Parliament's Monsoon Session ended yesterday. It has been a momentous week indeed. It has thoroughly exposed the ruling Congress Party as a degenerate political grouping for whom nothing else matters any longer except survival in the office.

The climate in the capital on the eve of the crucial vote on the no confidence motion was really disgusting. Wheeling-dealing of the worst kind was witnessed on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. Ethics and morality were thrown to the winds in a manner as to make even Congressmen confess in anguish "Our government may have survived but we feel ashamed at the manner in which it has managed this."

PM Silent on BJP's Charges

The no-confidence motion against the Rao government was based mainly on the issue of corruption. The BJP particularly highlighted the Stock Scam and the Bofors payoff. It also castigated government for its dismal failure in handling J & K, and in bringing to book those responsible for the horrendous Bombay and Calcutta blasts. It is remarkable that in his reply the Prime Minister did not even mention any of these issues. His silence is eloquent testimony to the fact that government's position on these issues is totally 'indefensible.'

Government's Dinging Against BJP

Following up on the Prime Minister's threat to thwart the growth of the BJP on the pretext of delinking religion from politics, the Union Home Minister came to the Lok Sabha on Thursday with the 80th Amendment to the Constitution seeking to achieve this end. To supplement this, the Law Minister introduced a Bill to mend the Representation of the Peoples Act 1951 to provide for deregistration of political parties if their activities did not conform to socialism, secularism or democracy.

During the past few months, whenever government talked about bringing legislation to delink religion from politics, non-BJP Opposition Parties enthusiastically hailed such announcements. It is significant, therefore, that when the proposed Bills were actually brought to the House, almost all these parties joined hands with the BJP to oppose these bills. Some of them were as vehemently opposed to the Bill as the BJP, others expressed strong reservations. The net result of this opposition was to make government announce that it was willing to refer the matter to a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament. But it qualified its announcement by saying that they would like the Bill to be passed in this very Session and that they would not like the Select Committee to dilute any provision delinking politics from religion. These pronouncements mean that the BJP would continue to have to be vigilant about government's designs.

Religion is not wrong, abuse of religion is wrong. Already there are provisions in the law to prevent such abuse. What is now sought to be done by the ruling party is to gag ideological debate. Let the people decide who is abusing religion. Those who sponsor *Soma Yagyas* to counter the VHP's Ayodhya movement or declare in their manifestoes resolve to set-up a Christian State in Mizoram or announce that Friday would be a holiday in Kerala schools must realise that they are in a fragile glass house. It would be prudent for them not to be throwing stones at others.

Vande Mataram!

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National Executive

New Delhi

18 December, 1993

This is the first meeting of the BJP National Executive after the November elections. I am sorry I am not able to attend the meeting. Like me, Dr. Joshi and Shri Kalyan Singh also are similarly forced to stay away from this Executive meet.

This meeting would have to take stock of the poll results, analyse the verdict dispassionately, draw the necessary lessons, apply correctives where need be, and plan the party's future course of action.

I am sure that as decided at the meeting of party office-bearers held on 29 November, 1993 our General Secretaries must have visited the States which went to the polls, held discussions with State office-bearers, and prepared a consolidated report for consideration of the National Executive.

The Executive's deliberations on the Report, the conclusions it draws, the counsel it gives to party cadres, and the action plan it formulates for the future, would be keenly awaited.

The Executive's, of course, would be a micro-analysis of the results, based on the detailed inputs provided by our State units. However, taking a macro-view of the party's poll performance, I would like to share with the Executive some of my broad perceptions.

BJP is Now the Principal Pole of Indian Politics

1. The November 1993, elections have firmly established the BJP as the principal pole of Indian politics. For all these past decades since independence, the main touchstone for evaluating the outcome of any major election has been:

How has the Congress fared? Has it won, or has it lost?
The touchstone has now changed. Today, the test is: How
has the BJP fared? Has it gained or has it lost?

We should have done Better

2. Let it be candidly acknowledged that the BJP has not fared well. That we have fared much better than the Congress or our other opponents is no longer deemed very relevant in the People's perception.

Out of the five States in which we had major stakes, we have suffered a setback in two, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

The Party has enlarged its support base in the remaining three. In two of these, Delhi and Rajasthan, the BJP has formed governments. But in the third, namely, Uttar Pradesh, the growth in popular support has not been translated into seats.

More Votes but not enough Seats

3. It is significant that in all these five States put together, of the 9.8 crore voters who exercised their franchise, as many as 3.57 crores (36.18%) backed the BJP. This is one crore votes more than what the Congress has scored (2.59 crores, i.e., 26.24%) and four times what the JD has secured (89 lakhs, i.e., 9.08%)!

I recall that in 1989, when the BJP's tally in the Lok Sabha shot up spectacularly from a miserable 2 to an impressive 86, the *Economist* of London carried an analytical piece on India elections under a telling title: "Winner comes second!" An apt comment on the recent elections may well be: "Loser Stands First"!

BJP Ideology receives strong Support

4. Let it be properly appreciated that the setback suffered in this election is a setback for the Party, and not for its ideology. The substantial enlargement of the Party's popular base is proof that the Party's ideology of cultural nationalism continues to gather more and more adherents. The fact that in UP too where the impact of the Ayodhya

movement is directly felt, the BJP has not only increased its poll percentage but has secured 40 lakh votes more than the SP, BSP combine which today is ruling the State, only reinforces this point. The resounding victory of the BJP in the capital further emphasises the same point.

The drop in poll percentage is confined to two out of the four states where the BJP was in power earlier, namely Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. I hold that the BJP governments of these two States performed reasonably well, but the image of our governments in these two States was somewhat negative. This cost us dearly. In a democracy, very often, the image is as important, if not more, than the reality.

5. The plight of our principal adversaries is, of course, pathetic. In the largest state of the country, UP, both the Congress and the Janata Dal, have not only been decimated, they have been forced to support a government one of whose principal leaders has publicly denounced the Congress President as “the last Moghul” and the Janata Dal president as “a snake in the grass.”
6. In this election, we had set a high target for ourselves to form a government in all the five States. If, indeed, we had succeeded in achieving this objective, it may well have been some sort of record in Indian political history. Our supporters hoped, and our adversaries feared, that we would achieve this objective. That has not happened. The sprinter has failed to break another record. That he is still *numero uno* is inadequate compensation.

Momentum must not be allowed to Slacken

In the past few years, the party’s progress graph has been shooting upwards at a dizzy pace. Judging purely by this election result, the momentum of growth would seem to have slowed down.

Naturally, our supporters are disappointed, and our opponents feel relieved. The task before the party is to so fine-tune our approach and strategy that this disappointment or relief, as the case may be, proves a fleeting phase. The momentum of our activity must not be allowed to slacken.

Before concluding this note let me take this opportunity to convey to members of the executive, and through them to party units and workers, to our MPs, MLAs and MLCs all over the country on behalf of Dr. MM Joshi, Shri Kalyan Singh, Shri Vinay Katiyar and myself our sense of deep gratitude for the forceful manner in which they have mobilised the people to protest against our arrests.

Vande Mataram!

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