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## OUR FIVE COMMITMENTS

1. Nationalism and National Integration
2. Democracy
3. Positive Secularism
4. Gandhian Socialism
5. Value Based Politics

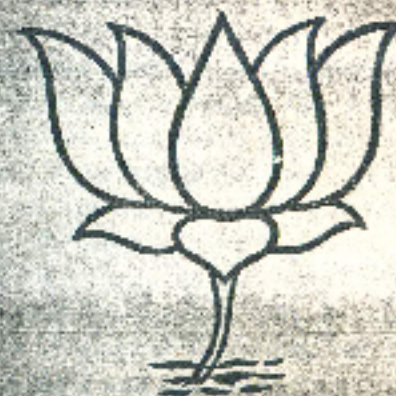
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## India At The Crossroads



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE



Bharatiya Janata Party Publication



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Text of the Presidential address by  
Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee  
delivered at the 1st  
National Convention of the Party  
held at Samta Nagar  
In Bombay on 28, 29,  
30th December 1980

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Mr. Chairman of the Reception Committee, Brother and  
Sister Delegates and Friends.

We are meeting here today for the first National Convention of the Bharatiya Janata Party. I feel extremely grateful to you for the affection and confidence you have bestowed on me by electing me President of the Party. I am conscious how onerous a burden this is. In fact in this hour of crisis it is no easy matter to undertake the leadership of any political party. So far as Presidentship of the Bharatiya Janata Party is concerned, this is certainly not an ornamental decoration. It is really not a post; it is a responsibility. No doubt, it is an honour; but even more than that, it is a test. It is at once an opportunity and a challenge. May God give me strength and understanding to measure up to this trust.

#### WHY A NEW PARTY ?

I do not propose to go into the details of the circumstances in which the Bharatiya Janata Party was launched. But I would like to assert that it was not with any happiness that we parted company with the Janata Party. From beginning to end we kept exerting to preserve the unity of the Party. We were conscious of the pledge we had taken at Rajghat in the presence of Lok Nayak Jaiprakash to maintain the unity of the party. But by converting the non-issue of dual membership into an issue, a situation was created in which it became impossible for us to continue in the party with any honour and self-respect.

There is no point in trying to unravel the intentions of those who created such a situation. But it is noteworthy that even among those who had nothing to do with the RSS, there were quite a few who regarded this dual membership issue as a



bogey raised for ulterior ends. Many of these are among the founder members of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The enthusiastic support received by the Bharatiya Janata Party throughout the country during the past 9 months is in itself ample justification for our decision to launch a separate party. Today the Bharatiya Janata Party has a membership of over 25 lakhs. A large section of these entrants were not connected with the former Jana Sangh. Nevertheless, some of our opponents, prominent among them our Prime Minister, keep repeating that the Bharatiya Janata Party is only a new name for the former Jana Sangh. They feel disturbed over the growing popularity of the party in all parts of the country and all sections of society, and think that by saying so they can curb the immense potential that the party has for future growth.

The Janata Party formed because of the inspiration of Lok Nayak Jaiprakash has disintegrated. But his vision of a glorious India is still with us. We shall not allow it to be obliterated. His dreams, his labours, his struggles and his unflinching commitment to certain basic values are part of an invaluable legacy that we have inherited. The Bharatiya Janata Party is pledged to pursuing his unfinished task.

#### VALUE-BASED POLITICS

Today our country is facing a multi-dimensional crisis. Mounting inflation, deteriorating law and order situation, scarcity of essential commodities, increase in the number and intensity of communal incidents, aggravation of social tensions and violence, oppression of Harijans, tribals, women and other weaker sections, the explosive situation in the north-east—these are some of the dimensions of this crisis.

Those charged with the responsibility of finding a solution to these problems have no time for it. They are busy manipulating

their pawns and planning their moves on the chessboard of politics. I believe that the country's crisis is essentially a moral crisis. The biggest curse of our public life is that moral values have given way to self-seeking and power-lust, and politics has become a pure power game.

In its last phase this degeneration of public life can be traced to the year 1969 when the Prime Minister herself after filing the nomination papers of her party candidate, conspired to have him defeated by resorting to all kinds of unethical means. In the years that have followed this disregard of ethics and norms has only grown more acute. The emergency declared in 1975 had no relation to any threat to national security, internal or external; it was an unvarnished attempt to cling on to power. The disturbances created in courts during the Janata regime, encouragement given to such serious crimes as hijacking, the constant recourse to intimidation and coercion, the plot to promote defections on a mass scale—all these are facets of the same process. The present ruling party's naked collusion with anti-social elements during the 1980 election and its shameless incitement of communal, casteist and regional feelings in order to pander to vote banks also should be understood in the same light.

Yet another evidence of this process of degeneration is the double standards of morality maintained by Government. There is one standard for those who are their proteges or their relations and another standard for the rest. When prior to the Janata regime allegations were made against relatives of the Prime Minister she dismissed them in utter disregard of the Santhanam Committee's recommendations. In contrast, Prime Minister Shri Desai referred the allegations against his son to judicial scrutiny. It is only during the 28 months of the Janata rule that some efforts were made to stem this rot of moral decay.

It is not only the rulers or the political parties who are corroded by this decay. It really affects the entire society, the



bureaucracy, the industry and the trade. Even the common man is afflicted by it. Self-seeking becomes the order of the day. The nation thus suffers an erosion of moral strength and loses its capacity to face difficulties.

If we want to overcome the present crisis, the first and foremost condition is that moral values must be restored their place in public life. To identify these values we do not have to look outside the country. Irrespective of caste, creed, language, region, an average Indian cherishes deep respect for values like tolerance, contentment, simple living, hard work and brotherhood. Let us strengthen these values and build a new society on that basis. Of course, the modern context has to be kept in view. Pandit Nehru emphasised the use of science and technology for development. The nation has progressed on that account, but large sections of the population have not been beneficiaries of the prosperity achieved. Inequalities have grown. The chasm between the rich and the poor has widened. These distortions have to be corrected. We can do this if we accept Indian cultural values as the basis for progress, and regard the individual, particularly the weakest individual, as the focal point of our developmental endeavours. Gandhiji, Jaiprakash and Upadhyaya had all stressed this approach. It was acceptance of this approach which during the Janata regime gave birth to schemes like Antyodaya and Food for Work.

Building a society of this kind free from exploitation and discrimination and based on certain values is a challenging task. Merely invoking Gandhiji's name or making pompous declarations is not going to help. An arduous struggle is called for. We have to consciously organise the poor peasantry, workers, the Harijans, the tribals and other exploited sections of the population to this end. It is the organised strength of these sections that can really bring about this new society. Mahatma Gandhi's struggle against the foreign government derived considerable

strength from the success he achieved in mobilising these sections.

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 self-seekers who swamp the political stage, that its aim is not somehow to sneak into office and that its politics is based on certain values and principles.

### GANDHIAN SOCIALISM

The Bharatiya Janata Party has accepted the concept of Gandhian Socialism after due deliberation. Gandhiji did not propound any 'ism' as such. But his views revealed an integrated approach to life and even to modern problems.

Gandhiji did not regard man only as an economic being. Like all our ancient seers, Gandhiji wanted man to strive for the fulfilment of not only his material but also his spiritual needs. Earlier, we had Swami Vivekananda speak in terms of a spiritual socialism. The Bhagwad Gita refers to Samya Yoga. When the Ishavasya Upanishad remonstrates against casting covetous eyes on another's wealth, it is only commending a society based on *aparigraha* (non-accumulation). The adage, 'All land belongs to Gopal' ('सर्वं भूमि गोपाल की') also reflects the same spirit. Every *sahuti* (offering) at the *yajna* is followed by the chant *idannamam* (This is not mine). Here too, it is the same non-accumulative idea that is stressed.

There is a basic difference between Gandhian Socialism and Marxist Socialism. Gandhian Socialism starts with human values as historically evolved and tested and then attempts to reconstruct the economic and social systems on the basis of these values. In Marxist ideology, on the other hand, human values are made subject to social relations, material conditions and conditions of



production. Both Gandhism as well as Marxism claim to end exploitation of man by man. But Marxist Socialism cannot tell us why it wants to do so unless it gets out of itself, whereas the basic premise of Gandhiji's philosophy is that exploitation of man by man is a violation of human values.

The exploitation of man by man has not come on account of evolution and progress in human values. It is instead the result of loss of values during some phase of the progress of the socio-economic systems and the material forces operating in that system. Gandhian socialism insists that if economic exploitation of man by man is to be ended it cannot be ended within any value-neutral and so-called scientific social system; it can be stopped only through a value system on which the changes in the social system are to be structured as well as tested.

Marxists are unable to tell us as to what will happen when Capitalism is abolished, except that they will establish a classless society. In practice, however, something far worse has been happening where they have succeeded as their system has turned out to be tyrannical, dictatorial and destructive of human values.

Marxists and many other so-called scientific socialists often describe Gandhiji as anti-science. This is an utter travesty of truth. Gandhiji's whole life was nothing but a grand search for truth. And what is science if it is not a search for truth? But scientific methods cannot be applied to the search of man for his inner self or his quest for understanding spiritual reality or the reality of the mind. Gandhian socialism emphasises the reality of both the material and the spiritual, and it is only through this integrated way of looking at reality that human values can be discovered.

Another basic difference between Marxist socialism and Gandhian socialism is over violence. All communist revolutions

have come through violence and, tragically, they have survived by still greater use of violence against their own people. A Marxist revolution eats its own children. Gandhiji did not rule out the use of violence in certain situations but he had warned Indian politicians that to rely on violence as an instrument of social and political change or for resolution of class conflict would ultimately be self-defeating.

Yet another point of difference between Marxist views and Gandhian views is on the question of distribution of power to which the problem of violence is related. Marxist socialism does not possess an independent theory of the state or of distribution of political power. That is why Marxists do not believe in democracy. Although Gandhiji, like Marx, believed in the ultimate withering away of the State, he warned against the danger of the immense concentration of power in the hands of the State without any countervailing checks. There is difference between Marxism and Gandhism also with regard to the path and process of this withering away. In communist countries the state has acquired more and more power and is now using it against its own working class and the proletariat in whose name it rules. Recent happenings in Poland provide a glaring example.

Gandhian Socialism regards decentralisation as the basis of its political system. In this there are two streams of political institutions and processes both running parallel to one another. On the one hand there will be institutions of *representative democracy* and on the other there will be institutions of *participatory democracy*. Today in India there is no democratic participation below the level of Parliament and State legislatures. All powers vest in the bureaucracy. Under this system, therefore, it is not possible to involve people in the efforts for national reconstruction and to make them feel responsible for shaping their own destinies. Panchayats and District Boards should be given real powers and adequate financial resources. Their autonomy should



be guaranteed by the Constitution and should not be at the sufferance of the State Government.

These and other local bodies can be of service not only to their own members but also to one another and can be linked with the higher bodies. These institutions which Gandhiji used to describe as local republics can play a valuable role in curbing authoritarian tendencies and trends.

Gandhian socialism is totally against state monopoly of economic power while in communist countries socialism has become synonymous with such state monopoly. Concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the State have made communist regimes utterly repressive and antithetical to socialist humanism. In order to prevent concentration of economic power either in the hands of the State or in the hands of a few individuals we have to accept a decentralised economy. Both communism as well as capitalism have generated a new kind of inequality, inhumanity, violence, selfishness, greed, unrestrained consumerism and alienation. Gandhiji's idea of trusteeship points a third way to the world. It can imbibe good points of both capitalism and communism while rejecting their bad points. If society is to harmonise the interests of consumers, producers, the state, owners of property and labour, joining in a common endeavour, then there is no other alternative except trusteeship.

Gandhiji's concept of trusteeship does not depend simply on the good sense of those who are in power. Its real importance can be understood only in the context of institutional changes and organised people's power.

It is a pity that we in India never seriously tried to translate this idea into action whereas some other countries such as U.K. have started experimenting with it.

If in 1947 India had decided to pursue the Gandhian path we may perhaps have been spared the terrible crisis we are having

to confront at the moment. Even after 33 years of development and planning poverty continues to grow, inequalities have become sharper, and the unemployment problem has become explosive. If we had evolved an indigenous pattern of development in conformity with our genius and requirements and having regard to our human and material resources we would not have been in our present plight. As it is, today we are having to suffer the worst features of both western capitalism and Soviet planning.

Fact is that capitalism and communism are twin-brothers. One denies equality, the other freedom; and both deny fraternity. In spite of their spectacular achievements, both capitalism and communism are showing signs of decay. Communist countries are developing greater and greater inequalities. In capitalist countries on the other hand attempts are on to abridge freedom. There is a ferment in the world in search of a third alternative. Protagonists of both capitalism as well as communism find themselves face to face with problems which cannot be answered within their own systems.

Outside national frontiers also, there does not seem to be any great difference between capitalist and Marxist attitudes. Marxist powers have proved no less expansionist than the capitalist countries.

The Bharatiya Janata Party will mobilise a national campaign to have Gandhian Socialism accepted as a Third Alternative.

#### POSITIVE SECULARISM

Since ancient times, the State in India has always been regarded as secular. The concept of theocratic State is alien to Indian traditions and Indian political thought. "Truth is one but wise men describe it in different ways" is a belief fundamental to our thinking. The State has never discriminated between followers of different faiths. A very natural outcome of our commit-



ment to the concept of "Sarva Dharma Samabhava" was that in 1947, when we became independent, we resolved to set up a political system in which followers of all religions would have the same place. There would be no Class I citizens and Class II citizens. The fanaticism and tensions that prevailed at that time did not deter us from this resolve, because doing anything else would have been repugnant to our traditions and culture.

Democracy and secularism are inseparable. A state that discriminates between one citizen and another on grounds of their faith, which does not treat them equally, cannot claim to be truly democratic because one of the cardinal principles on which democracy is based is equality of all citizens. Our commitment to Secularism, therefore, is as fundamental as our commitment to Democracy.

Among those assembled at this convention, there are thousands who in 1975-76 put up a valiant fight in defence of democracy. They underwent all kinds of sufferings. Several colleagues of ours became martyrs in that struggle. Today, we can only offer them our respectful homage.

It is a matter of regret that over the years Congress policies have distorted the concept of Secularism. It has come to be identified simply with protection of interests of religious minorities. Indeed, very often Secularism becomes only a respectable garb for appeasement of narrow communal or sectional interests.

No doubt protection of minority interests is an important aspect of secularism. But in its totality, secularism is a much wider and a more positive concept. As indicated earlier, it constitutes the bedrock of democracy. It is also a guarantee of nationalism and national integration.

It is this broad and positive concept of secularism that BJP subscribes to. In the Indian background, we can claim to have

established a truly secular State only if we are able to instil in every citizen, irrespective of his religion, caste, region or language, a sense of Indian-ness, which I believe exists in all our countrymen and which needs to be assiduously nurtured and strengthened. This Indian-ness is based on a value system we have derived from Indian culture and traditions. This value-system has developed out of a synthesis of divergent experiences of various sections of the population over the centuries. This process of synthesis and harmonisation must continue, and all religions in the country can contribute towards making our citizens better Indians, and all Indians better human beings.

## TWELVE MONTHS OF FAILURE

Twelve months have gone by. But in Delhi, the Government that works is still nowhere in sight.

There is a Parliament, of course. Its winter session has just ended. By putting its seal of approval to 10 Ordinances in 24 days, it has set up a new record. The Houses have been kept sitting till past mid-night in order to pass black Bills like the National Security Bill.

On the 14th August, 1947, Pandit Nehru had said in the Constituent Assembly: "At the stroke of the midnight hour when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom."

On 22nd December, 1960, when the Rajya Sabha, deliberating till 1.00 A.M. passed the National Security Bill, someone could well have observed: "While all India is asleep, the elected representatives of the people, instead of devising ways to guarantee them two square meals, are engaged in forging new chains to enslave them."

The Supreme Court also is there in its place. In the *Minerva Mills* case, it once again reaffirmed that there are in our Constitution some basic features which may not be tinkered with by



Parliament. But Government is all set to have this verdict scrapped. The Supreme Court is being depicted as a roadblock on the path of progress. Quite a few vacancies on the Bench remain unfilled.

The Press generally is alive to its responsibilities. The demonic blinding of undertrials in Bhagalpur may not have come to light if *The Indian Express* and *Sunday* had not shown the enterprise and boldness to expose these misdeeds.

However, the newspaper world is gripped by an unarticulated fear—the fear of consequences that can follow non-conformist writing. The ghora of newspaper offices in Bangalore, and the mass rape, and murder of Chhabirani, wife of journalist Mahapatra of Orissa, convey an ominous significance that cannot be missed. If bizarre happenings such as these are not sufficient to keep the press in line, New Delhi is always willing to use its arm-twisting skills against press barons to fix the newspapers.

Abuse of governmental media, such as radio and television, has now transgressed all bounds of decency. The role of radio and television during the year has made utter nonsense of government's pretensions about democracy. Our shortsighted rulers do not seem to realise that once these media lose credibility with the people, they cannot be effective even as drum-beaters of the ruling party, a task they have shamelessly undertaken.

In New Delhi today, there is a Government; but there is no administration. There is a Prime Minister; but one who has lost her grip. The Secretariat is there as always; but the services seem struck by paralysis as it were. No decisions are being taken. No one is willing to own responsibility. Ministers wear a pennant look of nervousness, always fearful of the hour when they too might be shown the boot like Kamlapati Tripathi. The bureaucracy is demoralised, and feels apprehensive lest for being upright in the performance of their duties they might have to suffer humiliation or even imprisonment as DIG, CBI Shri N.K. Singh had to suffer.

The rewarding of Ministers and officers who had debased and discredited themselves during the emergency has had a very unhealthy effect on the entire administration. Victory in elections, which naturally depends on many factors and circumstances, cannot wash away the categorically proved conclusions of the Shah Commission nor convert the stinking scandal of Maruti into a monument of good conduct.

During the last 12 months the immoral process of defections prompted by selfishness and lust for power has continued unabated. Instead of trying to halt this, the ruling party has been unabashedly engaged in trying to seduce and corrupt potential floor-crossers. As a result, the already soiled reputation of politicians has been further tarnished. More distressing still, the party system itself has been seriously undermined.

When the Assam Assembly was placed under 'suspended animation' the Cong (I) had only 8 legislators. Now the party has 56. It may be noted that this accretion of strength has taken place during a period when the youth of Assam were immersed in a life and death struggle to save their State from foreign infiltration. Their struggle continues even today but the Centre is unable to provide any solution.

A large section of the people in Moradabad feel convinced that they can receive no protection from the P.A.C. The Bhagalpur police also seems to believe that by blinding undertrial prisoners they have only effectively discharged their duty of curbing crime. The stripping of a woman in Beghat by the police and parading her naked in the streets was shameful, but even more disturbing is the fact that hundreds of people watched this outrage in mute helplessness. All these happenings are pointers not merely of administrative failure or of a decline in social consciousness; they indicate a virtual disintegration of our institutional framework. Some political analysts have described the situation as "a civilisational crisis".



Whatever be the epithet used to describe this crisis, there is no doubt that this crisis is unprecedented. The fading charisma of one individual, the influence of a party cracking up with dissensions and the battered prestige of government are certainly in no position to surmount this crisis.

People who advocate adoption of the presidential system in place of our present parliamentary democracy as a panacea for these ills are either fools or knaves. In most cases it is the latter description which would fit.

Talks about a "President for life" and an "elected judiciary" are not the fancies of an individual. They are indices of a deep conspiracy which aims at perpetuating the hold on the State acquired by the present rulers with the help of negative votes. If these designs succeed, India would cease to be a republic. This conspiracy must be exposed and frustrated before it can materialise.

#### ELECTORAL REFORM

An analysis of the 1980 election results would show that once again a party that failed to secure the support of the majority of electors has succeeded in capturing power. In the last Lok Sabha elections the Cong. (I) secured 351 seats out of 525, but in terms of votes the Cong (I) got only 42.56% of the votes cast.

Indeed, it is one of the major quirks of our election system that under this system, on the basis of minority votes a party is able to secure an overwhelming majority of seats. Right since 1952 there has been not a single election in which the winning party has been able to secure the support of a majority of the electors. Even the Janata Party, when it won the elections in 1977, got only 43.06% votes.

This system yields odd results. In 1977 the Janata Party secured 43.06% votes but on that basis got only 298 seats, whereas in 1971 with almost the same voting percentage the Cong (I) was able to get 350 seats. Then again in 1980, with

42.56% votes the Cong (I) managed to get 66.86% seats whereas in 1977 with a higher poll percentage of 43.06% the Janata could get only 56.80% seats in Parliament. Critics of this system in Britain have said that this system makes elections a big gamble.

It is evident that under this system the people's will is not fairly reflected in the legislatures. The 'massive mandate' bragged about by winning parties is generally illusory. These parties represent only a minority of the populace. Nonetheless, by virtue of their legislative majority, momentous decisions are taken in legislatures, laws are changed, the constitution is radically overhauled but majority sanction behind these changes is really missing.

It is imperative that electoral reform is undertaken urgently. In place of the present majority system of elections that we have, we should adopt some variation of the List System, a system that has been worked successfully by most European democracies. The biggest advantage of the List System is that it would politicise the electorate, make them think in terms of party policies and programmes and thus minimise, if not eliminate, the vitiating influence of caste and community that presently dominates the thinking of the average voter. Above all, the List System will stabilise the party system which under the present system remains in a state of perpetual flux. It will not make elections the kind of gamble they presently are. Parties would be represented in Parliament and the State Legislatures broadly in proportion to their actual support in the people. No doubt, the majority system has some advantages. One person representing one constituency can better attend to the developmental needs of that constituency. West Germany has tried to combine the plus points of both the majority system and the List system and has evolved what is known as the Mixed System. It would be of advantage perhaps if we adopt the List System for Lok Sabha elections and the Mixed System for State elections.



A Joint Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms constituted in 1973 had recommended that an experts body should be appointed to examine the feasibility of adopting the List system in India. It is a matter of regret that there has been no follow up to this recommendation yet. In this respect the Janata Government also cannot be absolved of blame. The Janata Government did, however, approve of several other far-reaching electoral reforms, such as public financing of elections, and had decided to discuss its proposals with Opposition Parties before initiating necessary legislation in that regard. I demand that the Experts Committee suggested by the Parliamentary Committee earlier should be set up without delay, and that the proposals drawn up during the Janata regime be implemented.

The growing influence of money power in elections has always been a matter of concern but lately this problem has acquired dangerous dimensions. Money not only from indigenous sources but from foreign sources as well is reported to be playing havoc with our elections. In order to contain the corroding influence of money power at the polls the following measures should be seriously considered:—

- (i) Election expenses should be regarded as a legitimate charge on the public exchequer. Political parties should be given grants on the basis of votes secured by them in the preceding elections. Candidates who are able to save their security deposit should be entitled to reimbursement by the State up to the maximum limit of expenditure permitted.
- (ii) The expenditure incurred by a party on any candidate's election should be added to the candidate's own expenses.
- (iii) There should be a ceiling on the expenditure which political parties can legitimately incur.

- (iv) There should be a limit also to the external props of publicity used by a party such as newspaper advertisements, posters, leaflets, etc.
- (v) The accounts of political parties should be subject to statutory audit.
- (vi) As recommended by the Tarkunde Committee the Election Commission should be a multi-member body, and voting age must be reduced from 21 to 18 years.

The Janata Government had taken the historic step of allowing all recognised political parties the use of radio and television during the elections. There is need of further extension of the facility given. A scheme of political broadcasts also, apart from election broadcasts, should be drawn up.

I feel that there is a case for compulsory voting in India. We have had 7 General Elections till now but the number of such electors who have never voted or who have been generally indifferent to elections is still legion. The 1980 Lok Sabha elections, like the 1977 elections, were contested on some very crucial issues. But out of 35.40 crore voters, only 20.13 crores exercised their right of franchise. This means that more than 15 crore voters did not go to the polling booth. In several democracies voting is compulsory.

#### FOREIGN POLICY

By making foreign policy a plaything in the game of politics the present government has seriously undermined the national consensus that had developed on foreign policy during the last three decades.

In 1977 the Janata Party had fought the Lok Sabha elections almost entirely on domestic issues, and so, after winning the elections, emphasised the need for continuity in foreign policy.



In 1980, however, the Congress (I) dragged foreign policy into the election arena and made it a major plank in these elections.

If India's relations with its immediate neighbours have suddenly turned sour, the roots of this development have to be traced to speeches delivered during the election campaign in which it was said, 'Even small neighbours of ours are behaving arrogantly with us.'

By pursuing a policy of good neighbourliness and mutually beneficial bilateralism the Janata Government had for the first time in 30 years succeeded in creating a climate of trust and confidence in this region.

But now by reverting to the earlier Big Brother attitude towards these neighbouring countries the new government has in twelve months wiped off all the gains of the earlier period. The charge is baseless, even malicious, that the Janata Government, in order to win the goodwill of neighbouring countries, has sacrificed vital national interests. The Salal Agreement with Pakistan was entered into on exactly the same terms as our predecessor government wanted to secure, but could not. On the question of division of Ganga waters, while in 1975 our treaty with Bangladesh gave India only 11000 to 16000 cusecs of water, the treaty finalised by the Janata Government ensured augmentation of water supply to 20500 cusecs.

By acquiescing in USSR's military intervention in Afghanistan, which now has become virtual occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet Russia, the Government of India has tarnished the country's image the world over, and has isolated India completely from the neighbouring countries, the non-aligned nations and the Islamic world.

Freedom-loving Afghans who have always been our friends are never going to forgive us for our failure to stand up unequivocally against Soviet intervention.

The joint statement issued at the end of Soviet President Mr. Brezhnev's recent visit to India says not a word about Afghanistan. India's silence in this regard is even more eloquent than its earlier equivocation.

Government's decision to recognise the Kampuchean regime propped up by the Vietnamese army is without any principled justification. This decision also has created serious misgivings about the independence of India's foreign policy, particularly in the eyes of South East Asian countries.

It would not be out of place to mention here that even while pursuing efforts to normalise relations with China, the Janata Government never hesitated to condemn Chinese aggression on Vietnam. Aggression is aggression, irrespective of whether the victim is Kampuchea or Vietnam. India cannot afford to have double standards in such matters.

Independent observers cannot be blamed if they infer that Indo-Soviet friendship is getting transformed into Indo-Soviet alignment. The entire Indian people, all political parties in the country, appreciate the value of Moscow's friendship and would like to see it strengthened. During the Janata regime, despite misgivings in certain quarters, these ties of friendship did become deeper and maturer. But making Indo-Soviet ties meaningful and fruitful is one thing and allowing the impression to grow that in respect of world events, India has no strategic perception distinct from that of the USSR, is quite another.

Soviet Russia's armed intervention in Afghanistan and the reaction to this of America and its allies has precipitated in this part of the world a situation which should have prompted both India and Pakistan to forget the past and try to open a new chapter in Indo-Pakistan relations. It is a matter of regret that the leadership in both these countries has allowed a historic opportunity to slip by.



Pakistan ought to understand that the threat to its security posed by the presence of Soviet troops just beyond the Khyber Pass cannot be met simply by trying to grab arms and armaments from wherever it can.

India too must realise that it is in India's own interest that there should be a strong and stable Pakistan between India and USSR as a buffer. Any temptation to take advantage of Pakistan's present difficulties can in the long run prove very costly to India herself.

The Government of India should take an initiative to overcome the setback in our relations with Pakistan. When BJP Vice-president Shri Jethmalani visited Pakistan a few months back in connection with problems of Afghan refugees, President General Zia told him in the presence of the Indian Ambassador to Pakistan that Pakistan is agreeable to having a no-war pact with India. We should have pursued this matter from this point onwards. We should also take steps to resume talks with Peking at high level.

In the fast deteriorating international situation, India can play a meaningful role only if it expressed itself clearly and unhesitatingly against any encroachment upon the freedom of nations, any violation of frontiers and any interference in the internal affairs of other peoples. India should show some moral strength even in international relations.

### IN SEARCH OF EXCUSES

To cover up its dismal failure on all fronts, the Government is resorting to ever new excuses. The first six months were whiled away with the refrain that the train of administration had been derailed and ploughed into earth during 28 months of the Janata rule and that it will take time to put it back on the rails. The next six months are being passed with the alibi that the Opposi-

tion with its disruptionist tactics, is not allowing the Government to function.

Those who raised a hue and cry at some stray incidents of chain-snatching in Delhi during the Janata days are now indulging in legal hair splitting to prove daylight dacoities as mere robberies. Those who hurled stones at me as a protest against delay in the arrest of Billa and Banga, are now mum over the failure of the police to trace the murderers of Jaisinghani, uncover the mystery of Mrs. Purnima Singh's death and haul up all the criminals responsible for the murder of the Nirankari Baba.

The incidents of Pipra and Paresbigha in Bihar were no less painful than that of Belchi. But the Prime Minister did not care to go there even in a helicopter whereas she went riding on an elephant to Belchi. She dismissed the UP Government on the issue of Naraipur but she refused to accept the resignation of her own Chief Minister whose Government had failed to prevent the killing of hundreds at Moredabad. Today she is never tired of blaming the opposition for making political capital out of every incident. But she seems to have conveniently forgotten what she had herself said at Naraipur that, if the Government commits a mistake, why shouldn't the opposition exploit it.

### KISAN STRUGGLE

The present wave of mass agitations in various parts of the country is in fact a spontaneous phenomenon. The Assam agitation against infiltration of foreigners, which is more than a year old now, has surpassed even the independence struggle in point of its sweep and the mass support and cooperation that it enjoys. It is a national endeavour expressive of the determination of the youth force to protect the territorial integrity of India and the identity of Assam. It has nothing to do with political parties or partisan politics.

The movements being run by the Kisans in Karnataka,



Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh etc. to get their demands accepted, are also not inspired by political parties. Kisans belonging to all parties, including the ruling party, are participating in this fight.

In fact, the economic condition of the peasantry has deteriorated over the years. The costs of inputs like fertilizers, irrigation, electricity, diesel, seeds, etc. have gone up; but the income from the produce has not increased proportionately. The soaring prices of non-agricultural goods have also hit them badly because they are consumers also.

The figures of rural indebtedness are startling. Only a few years ago, the overdue debts amounted to Rs. 750 crores. Now they have risen to 6000 crores. Moreover, 85 percent of the agriculturists are in debt.

The Bharatiya Janata Party considers the farmer's demand of remunerative prices for agricultural commodities as completely justified and supports it fully.

As long as a proper ratio is not established between the prices of sugarcane and sugar, cotton and cotton textiles, groundnut and vanaspati oil, jute and jute manufactures, etc., the exploitation of producers of raw materials will continue and the manufacturers of industrial goods will go on making exorbitant profits.

The price of cotton cloth has trebled in the last few years, but the price of cotton has gone down. The famous 'Varlakshmi' cotton of Andhra which fetched Rs. 1200-1500 per quintal, has now slumped to Rs. 500. The cost of jute production is Rs. 182 per tonne whereas the officially fixed price is only Rs. 150 per tonne.

The Andhra Government had fixed the paddy support price at Rs. 105 per quintal but the farmers had to dispose it off at Rs.

75 per quintal for lack of proper purchase arrangements by government agencies. This situation holds good at other places and for other crops as well.

The Agricultural Prices Commission has failed in its purpose. It should be disbanded and a new body set up in its place to determine the cost of agricultural produce by taking into consideration the prices of industrial goods as well as the soaring cost of living of the Kisans and their needs.

The farmer has now risen from centuries of sloth and ignorance to claim his due. He should be given credit for making the country self-sufficient in foodgrains and saving foreign exchange worth billions. The attempt to create a rift in the Kisan movement on the basis of big and small farmers or between the rural producer and the urban consumer will not succeed. The awakening created by the movement in the countryside will also benefit the landless labourers.

The Government should take the farmers into confidence and chalk out a timebound programme to double the foodgrain production. The world is likely to suffer from food shortage for a long time. However, India has the capacity to become a leading exporter in this respect. This potential should be fully utilised.

#### ASSAM MOVEMENT

Assam is burning. A conflagration has been raging there for the last one year. The people of Assam are becoming strangers in their own State because of large scale infiltration of foreign citizens. This process has been going on for decades. I recall having drawn the Government's attention to this matter in 1957 after being elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time. I had then warned that the situation would take an explosive turn if no effective remedial steps were taken to prevent such infiltration. But the Government failed to realise the seriousness of the problem.



The magnitude of the foreigner's problem is not small, as the powers-that-be try to depict it. In 1978, during the Janata rule, in Mangaldoi Lok Sabha constituency alone 47,600 names of foreigners were detected in the voters' list. Between 1957 and 1970, there has been an increase of 12 lakh names in the voters' list of Assam, but between 1970 and 1979, the increase has been of the order of 28 lakh new voters.

Due to the attitude of the Central Government during the last twelve months, the Assam problem has become more complicated. Sometimes the Government tries to give it the colour of Assamese versus non-Assamese and sometimes it resorts to the policy of bringing about a confrontation between the Assamese and the Bengalis. Yet again, it tries to make it a Hindu-Muslim question. But it always refuses to see the foreigners' problem in the state in its real form.

Assam is a frontier province. It has its geographical importance and from the military point of view it is the gateway of India. Full of scenic charm, it is rich in oil, minerals, vegetation, water and springs. It has a rich cultural heritage. But today's Assam is poor, disregarded, exploited and cursed. Assamese people blame the Centre for their backwardness. They also complain of callous attitude towards their language and heritage.

As a result of several rounds of talks between the Central Government and leaders of the movement, differences have already narrowed and now the deadlock centres round the future of foreigners coming between 1961 and 1971. The Government is not ready to settle them outside the State, whereas the agitation leaders do not consider it feasible and desirable to put the entire burden on their State.

Both sides should soften their stiff stand and adopt or via media in relation to the identification and deletion of the names

of those who entered the state between 1961 and 1971. The question whether such people should be allowed to live in Assam or settled in other States should be left to the new Government elected on the basis of a new voter's list.

The present government in Assam has been formed to fulfill a constitutional obligation. But there is no constitutional and moral propriety or expediency in continuing it. Hence, it should be dismissed immediately.

The mass movement of Assam cannot be suppressed with bullets or arrests. It is suicidal to deal with a movement, with which almost every Assamese man, woman and child is emotionally linked, as a purely law and order issue. The path of repression is not the path of peace.

The responsibility for the present situation in Assam rests on those political leaders who, out of selfish motive, not only turned a blind eye to foreign infiltration, but were also guilty of encouraging it. The soul of Assam is already beset with many wounds. The rest of India, by its indifference and the central leadership, by its short-sightedness, should not commit the sin of its complete destruction.

#### ECONOMIC SITUATION—1977 and 1980

The responsibility for the present economic crisis in the country lies squarely on the policies, or absence of policies, of the present Government. In China, they have a habit of naming their years. One is called the Year of the Moon, another the Year of the Lion, and so on. If we were to emulate their practice, Smt. Gandhi's first year in office would be remembered as the Year of the Snail. Nothing moved during the year. It was as if time had stood still. In contrast, the Janata Government's two years were really years of the Galloping Horse!



The worst aspect of this economic stagnancy is that the Government did not even know that things had stopped moving. Finance Minister Venkataraman, kept on changing his figures. He began by saying while presenting his disastrous budget—that industrial production would go up by 8 to 10 percent. He has now admitted that it may be no more than 4 percent. As usual, he is wrong. In fact, industrial production may be just 2 percent more than last year.

One of the major election planks of this Government was : curbing inflation. But the only two things that have gone up during the Congress regime are prices, and the share market. Everything else has been going down and down. During the Janata regime, national income went up by 6.2 per cent. This year the increase may not be more than 3 per cent. Industrial production during the Janata regime was 5.5 per cent a year. This year it will be less than two per cent. Again during the Janata regime, prices were stabilised; the increase was only nominal. This year they have gone up by 20 percent, and are still going up.

The Prime Minister says she had handed to the Janata Government a sound economy but that the Janata made a mess of it. She forgets that there was a drought in 1976-77, a year before Janata came to power. Then, there was a drought last year. Even then we did very well and the economy expanded. Now it is the other way round.

A good economy almost always results in good foreign exchange reserves. During the Janata years, the reserves went up by Rs. 2350 crores and when we left the Government the reserves stood at Rs. 5200 crores. Since then they have been coming down by as much as Rs. 600 crores per year. The nation's wealth is being squandered.

We hear a great deal these days about the Sixth plan. The Planning Commission boasts of having drawn up the plan in a

jiffy. Actually, all they have done is to chop and change the old plan prepared by the Janata and present it as a new plan. That is of course excusable. But what is going to happen now, and which can never be condoned, is that the Plan itself will be scrapped, because the way the prices are going up the Plan will be no more than a paper doll.

\* Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that India is among the top ten industrial countries of the world. Why should a big country like India be among the top ten, and not among the top five? The world is moving ahead much faster than we are. Even small countries like South Korea have left us far behind. A nation's economy is like a man on a bicycle: if you stop peddaling, you fall down. This Government stopped peddaling long ago, and is about to fall.

#### AT THE CROSSROADS

However, one need not be overmuch concerned about the question whether this Government will fall or survive. In a democracy, Governments will come and Governments will go. The pertinent question really is: will India be able to face the present challenges successfully on the basis of its value-system and be able to build a new future for itself?

Friends, the situation is grave. The country is once again standing at the cross-roads of destiny. On one side, we can see clearly the threat of authoritarianism; on the other we can also perceive the dangers of anarchy. We have to prepare the people to face these twin dangers. The BJP does not favour the politics of confrontation, but at the same time we would never shy away from confrontation, if the situation so demands.

The soul of Indian democracy dwells in the intense desire of our 650 million people for equality and for freedom from exploitation. Those who keep thinking of devising ways to destroy or



debilitate democracy can do so only at the risk of being swept away by the fury of the people.

In our struggle for the restoration of moral values and in defence of democracy, let us involve the farmers, the workers, the rural poor, the artisans, the youth, the students and the women and create in them the realisation that their conditions would improve only if they exert in a corporate manner to change the status-quo.

#### A CALL :

The BJP is resolved to devote itself to politics rooted in the soil. Only by that course can we restore the confidence of the people in politics, political parties and political leaders. The days of summit politics are over. Manipulative politics also has no future. There is no place in BJP for people madly in pursuit of post, position and pelf. Those who lack courage or self-respect may go and prostrate themselves at the Delhi Durbar. So far as we are concerned, we are determined to wage a relentless struggle against the dangers I have indicated. With the Constitution of India in one hand and the banner of equality in the other, let us get set for the struggle. Let us take inspiration from the life and struggle of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Let Mahatma Phule be our guide in our crusade for social justice.

Standing on the shores of this ocean beneath the Western ghats, I can say this with confidence about the future: Darkness will be dispelled, the Sun will rise and the Lotus shall bloom!

VANDE MATARAM