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विषय : निबन्ध...

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SELECTED SPEECHES

Morarji Desai



REFBK-0009692



THE DIRECTORATE OF PUBLICITY BOMBAY

सं. 23963 वि. ...
उ. 9926 नो. वि. ...
सं. 9926 नो. वि. ...

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Morarji Desai



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SELECTED SPEECHES

1949—1956

Morarji Desai

अनुक्रम २३७.७३ वि. दि. २३.७.५३
क्रमांक ७७७७ नों दि. २३.७.५३



THE DIRECTORATE OF

REFBK-0009692 T OF BOMBAY,

PREFACE

Shri Morarji Desai first became Minister for Revenue and Forests in the first Congress Government of Bombay 1937. In 1946, he again became Minister in charge of Home and Revenue, and finally, in 1952, he assumed charge as Chief Minister.

Many decisions on problems of public importance were taken by the Government of Bombay during the years following Independence. The present volume contains a selection of Shri Desai's speeches, broadcasts and messages on various issues as they arose from time to time and covers the period from 1949 to 1956.

Shri Desai mostly made extempore speeches and as such the selection had to be confined to a comparatively small number of available speeches, written or recorded. It is, therefore, possible that some of his most important and enlightening speeches may not have found a place in this volume, excepting those which were recorded and later reproduced.

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BOMBAY

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I

HOMAGES



सं. २३७५३ वि. दि. २५/११/५८
क्रमांक. ९९२८ नों. दि. २५/११/५८

1. MAHATMA GANDHI

The most valuable tribute that we can pay to the memory of Bapu is to carry out his teachings and to work unceasingly for the ideals laid down by him.

On the sacred occasion of Gandhiji's death anniversary, I appeal to every citizen to ponder over the philosophy Gandhiji preached and to adopt in his life the principles he propounded. That will be the real tribute to that great man, who shaped the destiny of India during the last half century.

Gandhiji demonstrated to the world the strength of soul and spirit as against that of physique, of the moral values as against that of the material ones and of sacrifice and service as against that of selfishness and acquisition. He taught us the beauty of truth and the substance of spirit. He told us how to sacrifice all and live and die for our country. In short, he identified himself with the values for which Bharat stood for ages, but which were being given up fast as a result of bondage and the impact of Western civilisation.

The present Government is endeavouring to shape society on Gandhian principles. Efforts are being made by the Government to revive cottage industries and to foster increased use of Khadi by the people. If our national economy is to be sound, we must develop intense patriotism for Indian goods, especially for Khadi and other products of cottage industries. While we should not neglect our large industries, we must foster and patronise fully our small industries to ease our unemployment problem.

We have tried faithfully, and to the best of our ability, to translate the values which Gandhiji preached for the welfare of the people of the country. Whatever results we have achieved are all due to the inspiration furnished to us by the one whom we and the whole world have acknowledged as the Father of the Indian nation.

I am convinced that the great forces Gandhiji set into motion are working silently and powerfully to move India in the direction of prosperity and greatness.

The reorientation of the people's ideas and actions on the lines of Indian traditions has already begun. Now the need is for more and more people in the country to realise this and join in the effort by personal example. Of course, there are some other forces also—forces of disruption, untruth, violence and narrow-mindedness—which work in the opposite direction. In the context of the circumstances obtaining in the world today, there is supreme need for national unity and strength. If the memory of Gandhiji is to be honoured, the people should not be carried away by the passion of emotion or by thoughts of petty advantage and we should root out every tendency that hampers the progress of the nation.

He envisaged a new India, and lived and died for it. Swaraj was his immediate goal as without freedom it was impossible to do anything effectively in any other sphere of life.

In the social sphere, he preached the removal of untouchability, uplift of women and the down-trodden, prohibition, truthful life and a series of other reforms calculated to secure a happy home and society for the common man. In the economic sphere, he lighted the torch of Swadeshi, preached harmonious relations between the employer and the employee and worked for the revival of cottage industries, which alone can provide employment to large masses in the country.

In the larger sphere, he worked as an apostle of peace and a champion of the oppressed and bewildered. The

nations of the world paid him homage by lowering the flag of the United Nations when he died.

Gandhiji's name reminds us of the noble and inestimable services which this singularly great man—saint, statesman and patriot—has rendered to his country and to the world. All those who had the privilege of being associated with him in his struggle for the political, social and economic revolution in the country were profoundly influenced by his thought and ideology. It is but natural that those of us who have been called upon to frame new policies for free India and to implement them should try to shape the country and society on the model of Gandhiji's ideas.

Thus, our Prime Minister has evolved a foreign policy which aims at maintaining world peace. That policy has attracted world attention and drawn almost universal admiration. In a world in the grip of an intense cold war, it is difficult to keep clear of power blocs and their pressure on a country's foreign policy. Our foreign policy has been one of peace. But it is not negative neutrality, as has been stressed from time to time by our Prime Minister. We have been trying to be friends with all countries and people. Our proposals regarding the Korean tangle received the approval of the United Nations and our soldiers of peace are doing excellent work in regard to repatriation of prisoners of war, in spite of heavy odds. The spirit underlying the foreign policy is essentially the spirit of Gandhiji's teaching.

Again, the rejuvenation of rural economy and the uplift of the masses, materially and morally, were the passionate desires of Gandhiji. For this purpose, he evolved the constructive programme. Anyone who has seen the national enthusiasm, especially in the rural areas for the Five-Year Plan, Community Projects, National Extension Service and Local Works and the large amount of voluntary labour rendered by the people in this regard, would immediately realise how Gandhiji's ideas on the uplift of the masses are sought to be put into practice today.

We, in our own humble way, have tried to implement some of the reforms which were so dear to Gandhiji. He fervently advocated prohibition of alcohol and narcotic drugs as he saw the degradation and misery brought about by the habit of drink and addiction to drugs. Long before the nation's Constitution adopted prohibition as one of the directive principles, we worked out a programme of gradual prohibition, culminating in total prohibition. As Gandhiji had predicted, prohibition has brought new life to many people who used to live a sub-human existence and who are today living a little more happily, particularly in the rural areas and in the backward regions of our State.

Gandhiji never believed in strife and had stressed the need for harmony in industry and improvement in the relationship between employer and labour. The Government of Bombay has helped vigorously to uphold the principles of healthy organisation of labour and safeguarding of its rights and privileges while getting it to realise its responsibilities not only towards the employers but also towards society as a whole. Bombay State has led in labour legislation intended for the welfare of labour and collective interests of the consumer, the people and the nation generally. We have also done whatever was possible to solve the problem of untouchability and given succour to Harijans and Backward Classes, and these concessions will continue.

The system of basic education introduced in the State on a limited scale is based on the Gandhian approach of equipping the child with training in vocations like spinning, weaving and others.

The Gandhian approach towards administrative problems has been one of a high sense of justice and fairplay and absence of any animus against any class. Government policy has toed that line. In the solution of some of the thorniest problems such as those of land tenure reform, we have tried and, I may say, tried to a large extent successfully, to achieve the welfare of the toiler without bloodshed. Our tenancy legislation has followed the line of revolutionary changes through peaceful means.

We have generally, in our administration, been fighting all the evils of corruption and nepotism and the influence of privileged classes. We have been constantly seeking to infuse into public servants the ideals of justice and service.

And finally, we have, as our special tribute to Gandhiji, introduced the one-crore rupee programme of Sarvodaya, which had been the dearest to his heart. The programme is a concrete programme for achieving the uplift of all classes of society, particularly with education and assistance to the masses swamped in ignorance, poverty and backwardness. It is not spectacular; but its effects are of the most permanent character and it is being worked systematically. I have been privileged to help in its working at close range and I can assure you that the men pressed into the programme, some of whom had worked under the guidance of Gandhiji and derived inspiration and working experience from Gandhiji's own work in the Ashram and the field, are in close liaison with the administrative departments, giving a very good account of themselves.

Talk broadcast from the Bombay Station of All India Radio, January 30, 1954.

2. LOKAMANYA TILAK

No other words can express better the country's tribute to the memory and services of Lokamanya Tilak than those of Gandhiji who said: "No man preached the gospel of Swaraj with the consistency and insistence of the Lokamanya." His countrymen, therefore, implicitly believed in him. For us, he will go down the generations yet unborn as a maker of modern India. They will revere his memory as a man who lived for them and died for them. It is a blasphemy to talk of such a man as dead. The permanent essence of him abides with us for ever. Let us erect for the only Lokamanya of India an imperishable monument by weaving into our lives his bravery, his simplicity, his wonderful industry and his love of his country.

Tilak's career was like a lighthouse, which acts as a guide and a warning to mariners that there are rocks ahead. It also acts like a safe haven if the beaconing of the lighthouse is followed. Tilak had for years guided the nation along the high road of building popular strength by awakening among the people a consciousness of self-respect and self-reliance and pointing to the futility of petitioning and memorialising alone.

A close study of his life would repay amply any student of the freedom movement in India. His teachings, embodied in his personal example, would always be there as a lighthouse to storm-tossed and sea-sick mariners to guide them through the right direction to a safe port.

Dadabhai Naoroji, Lokamanya Tilak and Gandhiji constituted the trio to whom the country's great gratitude

is due. Dadabhai was the first to give open expression to the ideal of Swaraj in 1906 as the panacea for the country's ills, Tilak declared it as a birthright in 1916 and Gandhiji, with his efforts, saw during his life-time that the Swaraj had materialised as a fact of life.

The name of Lokamanya Tilak will remain for ever in the history of India as the father of Indian unrest, who gave to his countrymen the illustrious slogan "Swaraj is my birthright".

Some of the misconceptions about the Lokamanya are still prevalent in certain circles. These are mainly due to ill-gathered information about him by British writers from questionable sources and assiduously perpetuated in cold print in certain books. Some of our own countrymen also collaborated in this process. Tilak was often associated, for instance, in the minds of ignorant or negligent critics as one who was indifferent to the methods employed for achieving political ends. He was also accused of justifying any means for realising a desired end. But the fact was that he kept a close watch on the tactics of the opponents and kept himself always ready to defend himself against them. He used to employ the means befitting the situation. He was a learned philosopher with an indomitable spirit. He used to define his policies and methods and decided the means accordingly.

Efforts were made to link up the Lokamanya with the cult of the bomb in Maharashtra and Bengal by the police during the nineties of the last century and the first decade of the current century. All that clearly emerged after the many court cases, and even otherwise, was that the Lokamanya was an altogether law-abiding and militant, constitutional fighter for freedom, an organiser of the people's discontent in constructive channels and a believer in passive resistance when all other remedies were unavailing. That was his political philosophy. Uncontestable testimony to his faith in a passive resistance programme was to be found in the anti-drink campaign that he organised in Poona city and Maharashtra districts in 1908, soon after the Surat Congress. It assumed all forms of bringing pressure

to stop the drink traffic and introduce prohibition, including picketing of liquor shops. That movement became a movement of civil disobedience.

The Lokamanya formulated a political policy after a good deal of deliberation and he adhered to it through thick and thin. That certainly was not a policy of encouragement to violence or unlawful activity. He properly assessed, as a young under-graduate, the worth not only of the effort of 1857 but of the abortive uprising of Vasudeo Balvant and seemed to have very definitely come to the conclusion that popular awakening, building up the power of resistance of the people and constant opposition to the bureaucratic rule would alone lead to India's political salvation at an opportune time. He was of the view that political rights would come not because of the fairness or justness of those rights only, but because of the pressure that people would be in a position to exercise. Therefore, his constant endeavour was to start a movement for developing popular self-respect, a spirit of self-reliance and self-assertion or participate in any such movement started by others and strengthen it.

Talk broadcast from the Delhi Station of All India Radio, August 1, 1955.

23.9.53 वि: दि. ५
 क्रमांक ११२८ नों: दि. ५/११/५८

3. SARDAR PATEL

In the present situation of the world, especially in the situation prevailing in India, the passing away of Sardar Patel is a very great calamity. Our need of him was the greatest in the present circumstances and for some more years at least. For we shall hardly be able to get a captain like him, able to lead the nation through the difficult situation that we are in today. His presence in these days by the side of Pandit Jawaharlal was very necessary. But God willed it otherwise and the burden has fallen on us all and it is our duty to take it up. To establish unity in the country and to raise India to a higher plane — that is the task before us. The Sardar during his lifetime showed us the way and led us in the Satyagraha fight for Indian independence ; but now we shall have all to find our way together. Had the Sardar not been victorious with his tact and courage at Bardoli, our struggle for Swaraj would not have, I think, gained that tempo which it did afterwards. He gave us courage. If we tread the right path we can be successful and maintain our freedom intact. He achieved a great task even after the attainment of freedom. With his tact and alertness he tied with the bond of unity the six hundred and odd States to the Indian Union, and has left a glorious example before the world. It is after millenia that India has become one. To maintain and consolidate that unity is our task. We should forget our differences and unitedly strive to march forward. We should always bear in mind his burning patriotism and do our work. And this, I believe, is the duty we owe to his memory.

Sardar Patel's achievements as a great statesman, as a matchless captain of our forces, as a party organiser, as a sound and brilliant administrator, as a constructive worker, and above all, as a great architect of India's unity and integration are matters of recent history and hardly need any recapitulation.

No place did he occupy which he did not adorn with peerless lustre; no field of activity did he touch to which he did not make his own characteristic contribution.

While there are virtues which we all love and revere, and achievements for which we must be eternally grateful, we must not lose sight of the great sense of human values which the Sardar possessed, the keen sense of humour which often enlivened an atmosphere of gloom and the directness and forthrightness which cut, with sword-like precision and swiftness, many a Gordian knot.

Even though possessed of a stern exterior, he had a soft and affectionate disposition. He acted not only as a guide, friend and philosopher to his comrades or his companions, but also as their nurse when the occasion demanded, and ministered to their ordinary daily needs as though he was one of them. After having formed his own judgment of them, he gave his trust and confidence to the extent that they deserved and thereby created that atmosphere of mutual trust which enabled him to weld all into a team and get the best out of them.

A hard task-master, he took account of all, howsoever highly placed; in doing so he gave credit where it was due and corrective censure where it was merited. It was these essentially great and human virtues which enabled him to command unstinted loyalty and to claim unbounded affection from all those whose pleasure and privilege it was to serve him.