



PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

(Delivered at the B.K.D's Pradeshik Sammelan
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We are meeting at a time when the country is passing through an unprecedented crisis. Inside, the economic conditions have deteriorated beyond description, the outlook for democracy is dark, and corruption has become a way of life for those in power; outside, we are regarded as a sick 'nation' with little hope of recovery in the near future.

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A little more than two years ago, Smt. Indra Gandhi swept all Opposition aside and rode to power on the strength of slogan of Gharibi Hatao. Nobody reminded her that the policies which she proposed to follow towards that end, had been pursued by the Central Government virtually since Sept. 2, 1946, when the Britishers endowed Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru with all the powers of a Prime Minister.

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In the matter of per capita income, today our country stands 102nd out of 122, according to the statistics prepared by the world Bank. Wealth does not mean currency but goods which can serve to satisfy the wants of a human being. These wants are innumerable but three of them, viz, for food, clothing and housing, are most important without which man cannot live at all;

(a) FOOD: According to Government's own confession in August 1972, some 50 per cent of our people were going on hungry stomachs and, according to the NSS Survey for 1968-1969, 37 million of our people were able to spend only less than 50 paise a day on maintaining themselves. Calculations would show that even a dog could not be maintained on this amount. Union Minister of State, Shri Mohan Dharla stated in the Lok Sabha that it would take 30 to 50 years hence before our people could get two square meals a day.



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Such is the state of affairs despite the fact that during the last 25 years we have imported food worth Rs. 5,000 crores from the USA and other countries, that 70 per cent of our people are engaged in agriculture, that the quality of our soil is superior to that of many another country and that our climate is particularly suitable for agriculture;

- (b) CLOTHING: We are not able even to clothe ourselves on the strength of our own cotton production, despite the fact that the area under cotton in our country is the largest of any in the world. We have imported cotton worth Rs. 1700 crores since Independence. As regards warm clothing, one need only draw attention to the fact that last year Government imported used clothes under the name of 'rags' worth Rs. 26 crores. These rags are said to have been sold for Rs. 600 crores within India. They were not rags in fact, but discarded clothes of the Americans;
- (d) HOUSING: Tens of millions of our people are living on streets or in slums in the big cities of the country.
- (d) FOREIGN DEBT: The Britishers had left gold and other currency worth some Rs. 3400 crores when they departed from our soil in 1947. Today, the foreign debt we have incurred since, stands at a total of Rs. 80,000 crores and Rs. 530 crores have to be paid out yearly as debt servicing charges.
- (e) ALL ROUND SHORTAGE: It is not only food and clothes that the country is short of, but there is a lack of power, petroleum, diesel oil, kerosene oil, cotton yarn, sugar and many another article of consumption.

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It is the socialistic policies of Pt. Nehru and her daughter which have been followed since 1946, that are responsible for this economic ruin. Politically a convinced democrat, economically Pt. Nehru believed in communistic programmes. Though Nehru and Indira Gandhi have never defined socialism, according to its orthodox definition, the term means public ownership of means of



production and distribution. It is the private ownership of property that, according to the socialist philosophy, is the root of all evil. So, land, factories and houses shall be owned by the State and agriculture and industries carried on by or under the direction of the State. Also, trade, internal or external, wholesale or retail, shall be the monopoly of the state. Which means that everybody in the country will be a servant of the State, and not a free citizen earning his bread freely or as he may like to. Thus, economic power will be concentrated in the hands of those who hold political power. According to all our Congress leaders, ^{former} ~~of yore~~, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Rajgopala Chari, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kripalani this combination spelled disaster for democracy

Further, socialism believes in big economic units, that is, big farms and big factories, and not in small individual farms or small industrial enterprises worked independently by an individual or a family.

Communism differs from socialism only in one respect: It will seize private property at the point of sword while socialism would take it away through a Parliamentary legislation. In the former case, no question of compensation arises while in the latter, some sort of compensation will be paid. The economy envisaged both by socialism and communism is exactly the same. That there is virtually no difference between the two, will be apparent from the fact that after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russia, the foremost communist country in the world, gave herself the name of the USSR, that is, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic.

After the Revolution, the Communist Government of Russia bent all its energy towards establishment of heavy industry at the cost of agriculture. As a true admirer or imitator, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru also declared that it was heavy industry and heavy machines that were the 'root and base' of economic progress:



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" If you want India to industrialise and to go ahead you must go to the root and the base and build up that root and base on which you will build up the structure of industrial growth. Therefore, it is the heavy industries that count; nothing else counts, except as a balancing factor, which is, of course, important. We want planning for heavy-machine-making industries and heavy industries; we want industries that will make heavy machines and we should set about them as rapidly as possible because it takes time."

He continued to preach this sermon till 1963 (November) by which time our economy had been shattered.

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It is true that in all economically developed countries, a larger number of people are engaged in non-agricultural than in agricultural occupations. But non-agricultural occupations, viz., industries, transport, commerce, etc., can be developed only when agriculture has been previously or is simultaneously developed. It is agriculture which will supply raw materials for industries and food for those who will turn the wheels of industries. It is agriculture alone which will put purchasing power into the hands of the masses with which to buy the goods manufactured by our industries. These masses, 80 per cent in the country and 86 per cent in U.P., live in villages and are almost wholly engaged in agriculture and other primary industries like animal husbandry, forestry, fishery, etc. So, if India was to be developed, as soon as we became independent, proper attention should have been paid to agriculture. Further, if 29 crores of our people are going on empty stomachs to-day, 5 crores or so were doing so in 1947 also. And food is the first necessity of man.

But, as we have already seen above, to the grave misfortune of the country, Pt. Nehru paid no attention to agriculture. With the result that the percentage of irrigated area to net cultivated area in the country which stood at 17.5 when the Britishers left our soil in 1947, has gone up only by 5 per cent, or, to 22.5 per cent during the 25 years that we have been independent. Had the percentage of irrigated area been raised,



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can, to 40 and drought affected not only 4 or 5 States as to-day, but half the country, there would have been not only no rise in prices, but 67000 crores of rupees would not have been drained out of our country and we would not have had to incur a crippling foreign debt of Rs. 60,000 crores.

The second important requirement of agriculture is fertilizer. While Mahatma Gandhi laid great emphasis on application of cow-dung and other organic manure, Jinnah ridiculed the idea and recommended artificial fertilizers instead. But our country has not been able to find the necessary investment to set up the requisite number of fertilizer factories till date. Whatever little fertilizers we are able to manufacture, are subjected to an excise tax of 15 per cent, a thing unheard of in any other country of the world, that is, even in countries whose farmers are 10 to 20 times richer than our farmers. On the contrary, there are certain countries, for example, Britain and Pakistan, which grant a subsidy to their farmers on the cost of fertilizers. Now, this is preposterous, that is, to go on importing food and cotton while doing practically nothing to increase our own production. But such is the planning that 'socialism' has dictated.

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When the demand for increasing our own production became insistent, Pt. Nehru recommended adoption of joint cooperative farming in 1959. Like many others living in big cities, he thought that big agricultural farms particularly when they are worked by large agricultural machinery, will lead to increase in production per acre. This is a fantastic idea having no basis in reality. Agriculture is a biological process. A seed will take the same space to grow and the same time to mature whether it is sown in a plot of one ~~acre~~ ^{acre} or in a mechanised farm of 1000 acres. Further, no person will voluntarily merge his farm or his own identity into a big unit and if he is forced into big farming against his wishes, he will not work hard. So that a large joint farm is advocated only by those who are ignorant of human nature or blinded by a false ideology. The resolution in favour of cooperative



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farming remained a dead letter despite high propaganda and heavy expenditure. Ultimately in Nov., 1963, Pt. Nehru came round to the view that it was agriculture, not manufacturing industry, heavy or light, that was the "root and base" of economic progress. The National Herald dated Nov. 10, 1963 carried the following report:

" New Delhi, Nov. 9 Prime Minister Nehru yesterday called on the Chief Ministers of States to realise the importance of agriculture, which is the key and the base of all progress, and not think vaguely in dreams of putting a big plant and solving all the country's problems.

Pandit Nehru, who was opening the two-day session of the National Development Council, said it was 'rather distressing' that the overall picture in many fields, more especially in the agriculture domain, was 'not one of fast progress.'

Pandit Nehru said agriculture was more important than anything else including big plants because that 'sets the tone to Indian progress and gives you the wherewithal for progress.'

If we fail in agriculture, then we fail inevitably and consequently in industry also', the Prime Minister told the Council.

He said it was true that the problems of poverty would not be solved in India except through industrial progress but at the present moment 'we dare not be slack' about agriculture. A slight increase in agriculture production had a direct impact on the per capita income. While industrial progress also had an impact, it had not that direct impact since it had a restricted effect. Even in highly developed countries like the Soviet Union, realisation was dawning on people that agriculture was the key and base of all progress."



In the meanwhile, that is, in 1961, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had gone on record that there was no use producing a lot of steel while the people went without bread and butter, and in 1962, the Chairman of the Chinese Republic, Mao-tse Tung, had revised his priorities and decided to give first place to agriculture, second to light industry and third to heavy industry. It will, therefore, be not wrong to assume that Pt. Nehru revised his opinion only after the communist leaders of China and Russia from whom he took his cue, had strongly spoken in favour of agriculture.

It is this neglect of agriculture which led to non-development of non-agricultural occupations and which is the primary cause of our poverty.

As regards our two other problems, viz, increasing unemployment and emergence of huge monopolies: They are also the result of wrong policies of Pt. Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi had taught us that particularly in the conditions of our country where compared with natural resources, our population was so dense, large machines or factories were out of place. A large machine driven by electric energy serves only to throw workers out of employment, and to concentrate capital in the hands of the proprietors of the machine. So, Mahatma Gandhi insisted all his life that no industry or handicraft which could be carried on, on a cottage scale, should be mechanised and that only those industries should be carried on, on a large or factory scale, which could not be carried on, on a small or cottage scale. For example, he pointed out that manufacture of aeroplanes, locomotives, production of steel and energy, etc. should be carried on, on a large scale, but 90 per cent of the economic activity should be carried on in villages and small towns by an individual or a family. Nehru, however, who was an advocate of the "Charkha" during the life-time of Mahatma Gandhi, ignored cottage industries altogether and, as we have already seen above, laid all emphasis on the establishment of heavy industry. Recently even construction of buildings, roads



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and bridges is being mechanised; a Government pre-fabricated Housing Factory has been set up at Delhi, earth-excavators and earth movers are being employed on road building and parts of bridges are being manufactured mechanically- which has rendered, and will render thousands of artisans and workers unemployed. Similarly, Government Bakery Factories are being set up in all the big cities of the country. Further, computers are being established in order to make simple arithmetical calculations, while educated young men are going without jobs.

This approach has led to large-scale unemployment. While the number of unemployed in 1947 was estimated at a figure of 5 lakhs, the number of those registered in the Employment Exchange today stands at a figure of more than 7 million, of whom 33 lakhs are young men who are matriculates or have received still higher education. The number of the unemployed in the villages is simply not known. But it is known that 35 to 40 per cent of the farmers in Uttar Pradesh, possess holdings less than 2 acres each and are under-employed.

The second consequence of Nehru's industrial policy was that disparities in incomes have widened further than what they were in the days of the British, and some 75 large Industrial Houses have emerged which own property worth more than 20 crores each to-day. To take the House of Birla alone; It possessed property worth Rs. 25 to 30 crores in 1947; the figure went up to 65 crores in 1951 and Rs. 400 crores in 1964 when Pt. Nehru died. On March 31, 1971, the figure rose to 700 crores. Not only that : these Houses are still being granted licence after licence to expand their industrial empire. Despite tall talks about social justice and Gharibi Hatao, the monopolists are being favoured by the ruling party, because it is they who fill its election chest. Politics in India had lately become an art of getting votes from poor and money from the rich by promising support to each against the other.



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As in the case of the role of agriculture, Pt. Nehru confessed during a debate in the Lok Sabha on Dec. 11, 1963, as follows:

" I begin to think more and more of Mahatma Gandhi's approach I am entirely an admirer of the modern machine and I want the best machinery and the best technique, but taking things as they are in India, however, rapidly we advance in the modern age, the fact remains that a large number of our people will not be touched by it for a considerable time. Some other method has to be evolved so that they become partners in production even though the production apparatus may not be efficient as compared to modern technique."

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Further that: