

**TRANSCRIPTS OF SPEECHES MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTERS
OF INDIA AND SINGAPORE, MRS. INDIRA GANDHI AND MR. LEE
KUAN YEW RESPECTIVELY, AT A STATE BANQUET GIVEN BY
THE FORMER IN HONOUR OF THE VISITING SINGAPORE PRIME
MINISTER AT THE RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN (INDIA PRESIDENT'S
OFFICIAL RESIDENCE) ON 2ND SEPTEMBER, 1966.**

MRS. INDIRA GANDHI

Mr. Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to New Delhi and I should like to assure you that for us, it is a very great pleasure to have you with us.

National Archives of Singapore

The name 'Singapore' evokes the friendliest sentiments in the Indian people. It is only a little more than a year that Singapore has become an independent State. It is one of the youngest states in the world, but it is a dynamic young state and it is blessed with the dynamic leadership of the distinguished statesman whom we are welcoming today.

Earlier in the evening, you, Sir, were talking about the antiquity of India and how it gave us roots and a balanced look into the future. And this is true. At the same time, sometimes it is a burden also, and a burden which holds you down.

And today it is one of our tasks, not to do away with our old tradition – for we value much of it and we feel it gives us strength – but to be able to free ourselves from some of it so as to be able to move ahead.

In that sense, you are fortunate that you start with nothing to hold you back, and only a bright future to beckon you forward.

You, Sir, are no stranger to India. But this time you are here as the first Prime Minister of the sovereign Republic of Singapore. Under your leadership, Singapore is building a multi-racial, multi-lingual society, governed by parliamentary institution and dedicated to the welfare of the people and to socialism.

Situated at the crossroads of culture and the migration routes, as the meeting-place of the sea-ways and sky-ways of the world, this city has naturally, attracted people from various lands. You have moulded them into one people.

Your ideals and vision are those which we also value: the vision of a composite society of many races and languages, committed to the ideals of democracy and peace.

Like you, we cherish the exercise of independence in international affairs.

You have seen, in this brief period that you have been with us, that we are facing tremendous problems. But I hope that you have also seen that we are facing them with confidence and with courage and with the feeling that these difficulties are of a temporary and of a passing nature and that soon, we shall be on our way forward again.

National Archives of Singapore

We started our independence with not only the tremendous burden of history, the tremendous burden of a colonial past, but the tremendous burden of a deep-rooted poverty.

As we started on this onward journey, we found that each problem has its solution, and also that each solution has its problems. This, I think, is the way of life and it is a way which none of us can escape. I think not only can we not escape it, but I think it is something which we must accept as a challenge and meet – as my father used to say – as a great adventure.

We in India recall with gratitude the understanding and support we have had from Singapore during our difficulties last year. This has further strengthened the relations between our peoples. Already, there has been fruitful co-operation in the cultural and economic fields between our two countries. These exchanges along with the visits of political delegations from the two countries have further stimulated the climate of better understanding and widen the area of friendship and co-operation.

We rejoice in the efforts of the Government of Singapore under Your Excellency's inspiring leadership for the economic uplift of your people through planned industrial development towards the goal of a welfare state. Endowed with rich natural resources, this hub of Southeast Asia has made spectacular advance in building a healthy and prosperous community.

Singapore has the reputation of having the best health – which you, Sir, have told us, can sometimes be a handicap – and also the housing, educational services in our part of the world.

I have referred to Singapore as a young State. But it is young in a very special sense for not only are you, its leader, very young, but I learn that half of its population is below 20. How I wish that these young people, like young people everywhere, could inherit a world without want, a world without war.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, may I request you to join me in a toast to the personal happiness and success of His Excellency, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, and to the progress and prosperity of the people of Singapore.

National Archives of Singapore

MR. LEE KUAN YEW

Prime Minister, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to thank you for your warm words of welcome and the generous words of praise and encouragement with which you have accompanied that warm welcome.

India is a very special friend of Singapore. We borrow our name from one of the ancient languages of India. And we have borrowed many things, besides: the secular state; the multi-racial, the multi-lingual, the multi-cultural community bound together in pursuit of a more equal, a more just society and whose leaderships share some special characteristics in that they are socialists by conviction and pragmatic in practice, and that they both operate a system of rule which requires a great deal of tolerance, patience and effort in political guidance and exhortation.

To India who pioneered the struggle for freedom of the subject peoples of Asia and later, of Africa, many of us owe a great debt in the work of the early leaders of her freedom movement and in the writings of her leaders, not least of whom was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It spread a message that not only sought

justice and made people want to fight against injustice and inequality but sought to give in an ethos which was filled not with bitterness but more with humanity.

And I would like to believe that like India, Singapore which is a microcosm of so many different peoples and cultures and languages brought together by the accidents of history and geography and modern science, so India a “macrocosm” – as many colleagues call it (‘micro’ – meaning small; ‘macro’ according to him meaning very large) – and if India can resolve her problems in that magnitude, then surely we must take heart in that our problems in more manageable dimensions must lend themselves to similar rational solutions.

However, the last 20 years since the first of the anti-colonial movements, as the present saying goes, as the present slang goes “anti-colonialism”, has gone through an interesting, a significant and a subtle change. The assumptions one took for granted – the monolithic structure of a Communist world movement making a broad appeal across race, language, religion to poverty and down-trodden masses – are no longer quite the same. Poly-centralism, revisionism and many other terms have been added to the world vocabulary of Marxism-Leninism.

And another factor has gravely altered, perhaps, to the detriment of Asian peoples the prospect of change. For one of the factors which made Western advanced countries give concessions to former colonial peoples was the terrifying prospect of the solidarity of Afro-Asian peoples seeking to redress ancient wrongs.

We have discovered, without great rejoicing, that with independence does not come the return to some idyllic, romantic past when we all lived together as so many brothers in one great humanity. Ancient feuds are resumed and worse, new quarrels are found. And so the solidarity of Afro-Asia is as much as a myth as the monolithic structure of the Communist world, with grievous consequences to the bargaining position of the “have” and “have-not” peoples of the world.

And, it is in this context, that I would like to believe that when we say – or when others used to say – “Asia for Asians”, “Asian Co-prosperity”, “Asian solutions to Asian problems”, we should not be unmindful of the fact that often, Asian problems first are not just caused by Asians nor can they be resolved by Asians alone. Perhaps political and social problems may be resolved by ourselves. But economic and worse, problems of security, are not within the complete dispensation of the Asian nations, and perhaps it is just as well for if it

were, then I think we would have a dispensation which would be a great deal more disadvantageous to quite a number of us than it already is.

So you see, Prime Minister, we begin to develop a degree of philosophical, if somewhat cynical resignation, to the new checks and balances with which we must try and find our way forward to a more peaceful and a more constructive world.

I would like to believe that the rallying-call which should bring Asians together should be that Asians should put Asia's peace and progress first and foremost. And, if we all try to do that and accommodate each other to have peace and to enable each other to progress and, if possible, to help each other to progress, then we would have a better chance of seeking the kind of life which we envisaged we should have as of right in the days when some other domination was lording it over us.

National Archives of Singapore

This is an old and ancient continent, peopled by many ethnic groups with old and ancient memories. You have spoken, Prime Minister, of the disadvantageous aspects of old memories: the debris of history of futile anger, bitterness, quarrels which are not productive. But it is when an old and ancient

group of people re-discover their freedom of action, their capacity to initiate things for themselves that things begin to happen.

I have been fascinated of late by the problems of the past. For I thought to myself that surely the human being must have, in its long and varied occupation of this part of the world, and many others must have faced similar problems. And I am a trifle disappointed in that really, no historian however erudite, however discerning, can tell us more than this: that, for some reason in some parts of the world, under some circumstances, in certain climates, some peoples rise to the occasion. They flower, they flourish – sometimes to die, sometimes to go on to greater effort. And all they can tell us is: that sometimes a group of people, faced with a challenge response; and they warn us that if the challenge is too great, and the response required too prolonged and too acute, then they perish in the end. And they point out the monuments that are all around the world, from the great rock carvings of Easter Island in the Pacific which it would be difficult to believe that the people who now reside on those islands could possibly have created; or to the Eskimos who expend all their energy fighting nature so that they have very little left for anything else. And they point out to other great parts of the chapter of human history like in the Indus Valley where one of the earliest civilisations took place; like in the Yellow River Basin where a very early civilisation took place thousands of years before Europe bestirred.

And the lesson they tell us is that whether there is no challenge – so they say – when the challenge is not as great as the Yangtse against the disastrous uncertainties of the Yellow River, then no civilisation really emerged. But when there was a challenge which man could meet, then he flowered in his greatness.

And in Delhi and in many parts of India, there are monuments that bear evidence to this tremendous response which your people made at other times in their long career.

I have no such relics to comfort me, which is a disadvantage for it gives confidence to know that in that same given place, that same given people had responded with verve and vitality and produced and flowered a civilization which left these great relics.

National Archives of Singapore

I should hate to believe that what I am doing in Singapore with my colleagues should be a kind of token by which they would say that once upon a time, there was a group of human beings who occupied this little part of Southeast Asia, who responded but only for a short while.

And it is with that hope, that what we do for ourselves has a more enduring and secure future for prosperity that I believe eventually, the qualities and the virtues and the strength, the deep-abiding wells of reservoirs of stamina and courage and vitality which created great and ancient civilizations that have occupied large parts of Asia – that they are not bereft of that wisdom to seek an accommodation that could bring an enduring and prosperous future for all.

Prime Minister, I have spoken of the similarities between your macrocosm and my microcosm. But there is, of course, one other great difference.

National Archives of Singapore

You carry a great tradition – not just in yourself and in your movement and in your forebears – but in the history which has impelled this civilisation and made it survive so many ancient conflicts. It must give you comfort to know that if it has lasted that long, it is likely to last to eternity.

I have no such comfort and therefore, I would like to believe that by some rational process of checks and balances and friendships and associations, we might be able to share in some of the security which your history affords you.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, may I ask you to drink to the health, to the success to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi.

National Archives of Singapore