

SPEECH BY THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER,
MRS. INDIRA GANDHI, AT THE STATE BANQUET
IN HONOUR OF THE SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER,
MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, NEW DELHI,
ON 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1970

Your Excellency, Mr. Prime Minister,

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are happy to have the distinguished Prime Minister of Singapore and Mrs. Lee with us once again.

The links between Singapore and India are many. As the Prime Minister himself graciously pointed out when I was there two years ago, the very name Singapore, being of Sanskrit origin, bears testimony to this link. We are glad that among those who have built that dynamic nation and made it their home are people whose ancestors were from India.

Reinforcing the ties of kinship are ties of shared historical experience, of freedom lost and freedom regained, and of common aspirations. As Your Excellency said in this very hall four years ago to the day, societies in our

countries are composed of many races and languages, and hence we both prize tolerance. We are secular states. We have adopted parliamentary democracy. We regard economic backwardness as our main enemy, and consider social good to be the supreme economic objective. Loyalty to democracy, to secularism and socialism in domestic affairs, and to non-alignment in foreign policy, establishes a special brotherhood between us. And whenever we have had difficulties, we have been heartened by your sympathy. We are with you in your endeavour.

In India, the recession is fortunately behind us. Our economy is poised for advance. Our aim is not merely to achieve quantitative increases of production, but to push ahead with structural changes. In quick succession, we have adopted several legislative measures in the last few months which are taking us forward towards our goal of establishing a truly egalitarian, socialist society. Only last week, we adopted a Patents Bill which will liberate our industries and our scientific research from foreign technological domination.

We have solved some problems. But no problem ever really goes away. It returns in new garbs and guises. Our very success in proceeding towards national self-sufficiency has increased rural disparities. Progress in other fields has heightened the impatience of all those groups and sections who have not yet benefited.

A major problem today is that of unemployment, especially of the educated. This again is a problem bred by progress. In our current development plans, we aim at creating opportunities by which trained young people can set up industries and be their own masters.

So, with our challenges we have the exhilaration of living in exciting times. Like other societies the world over, in ours also, some young people have taken to violence. They decry the tradition of non-violent social change built by Gandhi and Nehru, but unfortunately one has glimpses of forces of sanity and order beginning to try to contain this adventurism.

The times in which we live appear similar in some ways to the time of the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe two centuries ago - a time of flux and rapid technological change, and of the emergence of new political and economic concepts and new social patterns. Formulations seem to become old even at the moment of their birth, and the young everywhere are trying to find meaning and form out of the welter they see around. They seem to know what to reject but not yet what to accept and value.

In such a situation, we ought to redefine the very concept of development. Is it our aim only to enable our people to have the level of goods and services which people in the advanced countries do? Especially when these advanced countries have themselves begun to discover that “progress” does not create happiness, and that, in the midst of affluence, there can be unfulfilment and restlessness of spirit.

We must endeavour to strike a new equilibrium between the material and the intangible, the needs of the spirit. It is possible that the ancient wisdom of this continent could help us avoid and overcome the malaise brought about by the acquisitive instinct. But young people in many places are discovering that perhaps continuous change itself is a form of equilibrium.

Milton had once called Athens the eye of Greece. Singapore can truly be called the eye of Southeast Asia. I look forward to an exchange of views with Your Excellency on the changes that are occurring in our two countries and within the neighbouring countries and on the forces at work in the world. Your visit, Your Excellency, helps to strengthen our bilateral relations and will enable us to work together in the world.

We must also try to evolve a system of regional co-operation which will strengthen the countries of our region. It has been our view that true strength can come only from the building of our economies. There is great scope for helping each other in this task.

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

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