TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
AT THE SRI NARAYANA MISSION IN CELEBRATION
OF THE 113TH BIRTHDAY OF SRI NARAYANA GURU
ON 20TH AUGUST, 1967.

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow-citizens,

These are the little manifestations of a community which looks after itself. It is very important. If a group of people is not organised into a community, is not capable of looking after itself and is always depending on the Government, on some superior authority to do these things for it, then it will perish.

We have made progress over the last eight years since we became self-governing. And I would like to congratulate the leaders of the community who have organised this institution.

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Originally, when our forefathers came here, a colonial administration ran the administration in order that people could be in employment for the exploitation of the resources of the country, but with minimum of education, welfare and other responsibilities. because these things cost money. But over the years the British administration had to change its policies because people were

no longer migrants. They stayed, their children were born here, they had to be looked after, and hospital and clinics had to be set up, together with schools and universities.

But it is only with responsible Government by the community itself that all schools, all education became the responsibility of the States. let us never forget that if you, if all our citizens just sit back and say, "Well, the Government will do all these things, "we will not have that streak of self-reliance to survive.

To survive, you must feel your community. This is a beginning. Although the Sri Narayana Mission will always have a special meaning for the Indian community, it is an important development when you make an effort to cover in your charitable endeavour people of other communities.

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Similarly the free hospital which the Chinese clans run in Wayang Street and in Serangoon Road now give treatment to non-Chinese.

And so we gradually gel this feeling of togetherness. We came from different parts of the world. But those of us who have taken roots here must understand that without that camaraderie, that feeling of togetherness, as co-

owners and co-trustees of the future of our children born here, it is difficult to ensure continuity and progress.

Last week's National Day celebration marks another milestone. Those of us who are co-owners of this Republic must have a realistic appreciation of the privileges we are enjoying, how to enhance them for the future, and how to secure them.

Now we had notice that in the middle 1970's, some time between 1973 and 1977, the sentries will no longer mount a round-the-clock watch. They will be in a patrol car and will do the rounds. When we are in difficulty, we dial 999. But sometimes, it takes quite a few minutes for the patrol car to come. depending on where the patrol is at that moment. This requires careful re-thinking. We must, in part be our own sentry and hold our ground until the patrol car comes to rescue.

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Therefore, the emphasis must be on the greatest self- reliance. We must be able to stand up ourselves. To that we must build up our young citizens. This is a permissive society. We have inherited it and now we are the owners. But the British allowed a lot of people who are not rooted here to come. It was good

for the economy. They needed technicians, artisans, and clerical workers and they imported them from Hong Kong, Canton, Madras, Kerala, even Indonesia.

One of the great virtues of this society is its tolerance. But one of the defects is that the intensity of feeling between man and the soil is not so deep because the history is not so long.

In the old days if you just put a one-dollar stamp on a form, you became a citizen. This has not been possible after 1959. But now this group of citizens understands. ... We are being educated not just by what community leaders or Government say but more by what is going on in the world around us. The process of education goes on. We who are citizens, irrespective of race, religion or language, must be able to identify each other. There must be that camaraderie. We who are staying here must make sure that the place ticks.

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Over the years, in our schools we will produce a new generation. It is difficult with the first generation of immigrants born in China, India, or Indonesia. They have not gone through the same mould. They have different backgrounds, different values, different memories. But the boys and girls going to our schools are a different generation. They will be able to identify each other

immediately by the way they dress, by the way they talk, by the way they laugh at the things they consider funny, by their thinking assumptions,

If we continue to be so many people in transit, then this place is bound to be taken over by somebody else. I am sure the next generation will not allow that because they have nowhere else to go to.

Let me tell you a simple experience I had in London when I was a student. The British, out of a sense of conscience, took money from the Boxer Indemnity Fund and opened a club. Chinese from any part of the world can use it. It was called the China Institute. So if you were a Chinese, wherever you came from, you could go there. It was a nice place, quiet, central and comfortable with a library. You could get tea and things to eat at a modest price. I used to go there. But I will tell you something significant. After a while, you can tell a Singaporean and a Malayan from all the others. The Chinese from Hong Kong are different. they laugh at different things; their style is different. The Chinese from Mauritius are different, although it is a British colony. The Chinese from West Indies talk just like the other West Indians in their very special West Indian calypso way. The Chinese from Hong Kong are different from the Chinese from China. So, we found we had more in common with the Indians, Malays, Eurasians who came from Singapore and Malaya than with the Chinese from the

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other parts of the world. It is because of our common background, education, thinking, feeling, memories. We remembered the things that happened, the happy occasions, the sad ones, the fall of Singapore, the years of suffering.

Our children will grow up. Whether they are Indians, Malays or Chinese, remembering the same things. They won't remember whether the Indian Prime Minister will be buying the first stamp at a ceremony in Delhi for the Sri Narayana Mission that the message from the parent organisation stated. Because it has no nexus with their lives. But they will remember that on the 9th of August, 1967, they or their brothers and sisters of friends took part as cadets, dancers and flag-bearers in a big parade, together surging forward, building a vigorous society that gives equal opportunities for all.

This equal society is not easy to come by. It should not be taken for granted. In other parts of the world, they try to erase you, or remould you until you completely lose your past identity, reshape you into something quite different.

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We do not want to do that. I think that is wrong, Let everybody keep that life-line with this culture, his language, his tradition, his values. They are ancient civilizations: whether it is the Tamil script that goes back 3,000 years or the

Malayalam script that goes back for centuries or the Chinese ideograph. Each has a long history of wisdom and thinking behind the language and the literature. But we also all learn a common language. I speak in English today because I found that for this meeting it is the common medium.

And 20 years or 30 years if we succeed, there will still be the Sri Narayana Missions in Singapore. There will still be the Kwong Wai Shiu Free Hospital at Serangoon Road. It represents three districts in China. But the people they are treating and the people who are supporting the institution have become diversified.

It will be a link with the past. One day, when our students do their Ph.D. treatise in the universities, either Nanyang or the University of Singapore, they will dig up the past and say "Yes, this is how it began: separate communities. they had to look after themselves because the government had only a very small hospital, so they organised their own hospital." But as nationhood progressed, so the outlook broadened and embraced more and more people, Singapore citizens. This is a desirable and necessary process.

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I congratulate the Sri Narayan Mission and the leaders of the community that have kept this institution going for nearly 20 years. In 20 years time, we

may find that not only do you give more scholarships to non-Indians but you might have persuaded non-Indians to join you in your fund-raising committees. This the way to our future.

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