

State of the Nation

INDIA that is Bharat attained freedom on 15th August, 1947. Nation enters the fifth decade of freedom in a state of dejection and depression. President's Address to the joint session of Parliament on 21st February, was a clear confession of complete bankruptcy of Statesmanship. It shows how a great country becomes small when smaller men and women preside over its destinies. Reason is, no respecter of persons whoever they may be and whatever Offices they might have held or hold.

By M. J. Audi

Parliamentary Democracy does not mean the ritual of observance of technicalities of the Constitution and barren legalism but scrupulous and strict preservation of the percepts of the Constitution. Whenever reality and Constitution work at cross-purposes, nation is betrayed. Ironically, he that has stimulated opportunism and political permissiveness in a country is none other than the President of India. He has damaged, if not destroyed, the Constitutional fabric. The President's Office has let down the founding fathers. As the President alone is responsible to "Preserve, protect and defend" the Constitution of India, he should be always above partisan politics. Under no circumstances, Rastrapati Bhavan should become the house of intrigues or appendage of any political party.

Unfortunately, President Venkataraman committed several errors between October 23 and March 13, 1991 when he reluctantly announced the dissolution of the Ninth Lok Sabha. When the National Front Government headed by Mr. V.P. Singh fell, the President invited Mr. Chandra Shekhar, leader of a tiny group, to form the Government with the support of the

Indian National Congress (I). Thereby, he helped Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to govern the country by proxy. It is pertinent to note that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi dared not form the Government after the general elections of 1989 though his party was the single largest party with 195 members in the Lok Sabha. The President allowed Mr. Chandra Shekhar to retain for full one month his five Ministers disqualified by the Speaker of Lok Sabha. Thereby, he treated with disrespect Nation's highest and the most respectful forum. 117 days of Chandra Shekhar Ministry was a violent molestation of the Constitution as well as clear perversion of Parliamentary Democracy. Both would have been impossible but for the blessings of the President of India. Under the pretext of consultations with the so-called eminent jurists and constitutional pundits, President gave Mr. Rajiv Gandhi one week to "patch-up" with Mr. Chandra Shekhar and evade the mid-term elections.

So far India knows only one person that became the President of India without the patronage of the Prime Minister. That was Rajendra Prasad. Jawaharlal Nehru could not intimidate him. Rajendra Prasad knew that Nehru became India's First Prime Minister not because of his abilities but because of Mahatma Gandhi's certificate. Successors of Rajendra Prasad in the Rastrapati Bhavan have been the creatures of Nehru family. Some praised Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan as Plato's philosopher-king. Pitifully, Radhakrishnan forgot his philosophy on becoming the President. He was to Nehru what Gulliver was to the Brobdingnags - a toy for play. When the Chinese invasion of India cut Nehru to his size and showed his proper place in national and international politics, it was Radhakrishnan's turn to point out that Nehru

was only Gulliver amongst Lilliputs that is only the giant among the pigmies. He told the nation how Nehru had brought it "to sorry pass - a matter for sorrow, shame and humiliation - because of credulity and negligence".

Presidents from Zakir Hussain onwards have been docile dolls of Nehru and his off springs. Somebody called Nehru a banyan tree under which nothing grows. It was a wrong description. The parasites have grown, multiplied and prospered under the banyan tree. The Nehrus have helped many to live luxuriously at the cost of the public exchequer. Amongst them are the sons and sons-in-law of the Presidents. They are accommodated as the Governors, Ambassadors and various sinecure-holders. Only consistent conditions of the Nehru family has been dog-like obedience from its sycophants. In 1982, Giani Zail Singh put it picturesquely: "If my leader (Smt. Indira Gandhi) had said I should pick up a broom and be a sweeper, I would have done that. She chose me to be the President". Thus the Presidents have been *adatse majbur*.

Rajiv Gandhi deftly exploited the Majburi of the President of India. For a while, he conducted the puppet show dextrously. The Bofors was smoothly side-tracked. The submarines were again sub-merged. Airbus A 320 deal investigation vanished in the air. The D.M.K. Government in Tamil Nadu was dismissed. The minious and sycophants of Congress (I) boss were planted in key ministries at the Centre as Directors and Secretaries and appointed as Governors and Ambassadors.

What the mother did in 1979, the son did in 1991. Like Charan Singh, Chandrashekhar entered the Prime Minister's Office through "back-

door". Unlike Charan Singh, Chandrashekhar proved to be a tartar for Rajiv Gandhi. It is reported that Rajiv Gandhi ordered Chandrashekhar "to tailor" the budget for 1991-92 "to suit the interests of certain business tycoons". (Hindu, 22.2.1991) When the Prime Minister mustered courage to refuse, he was compelled to seek only Vote-on-Account. When the Congress (I) members began the boycott of Parliament on the question of "Surveillance" of Rajiv Gandhi, humiliation of Chandrashekhar was complete. He was thoroughly disgraced. Perhaps only graceful action of Chandrashekhar in his entire political life is his resignation as Prime Minister on 6th March, 1991.

It is said that the Indians lack sense of humour which is not true. Our sense of humour is as sharp and as strong as that of any other people in the world. What we do lack is a sense of 'shame'. Shamelessness dominates each and every walk of public life in India. One feels extremely sorry for a man who was eager to be known as "Mr. Clean" being involved in the worst corruption rackets, having the most expensive "security" as the Prime Minister and being under "surveillance" of the police constables from Hariyana. But tragedy is certainly not of one man. That man today is truly symbol of a degenerate nation. Between him and others only the shades of degeneracy differ.

Thomas Fuller rightly remarked that truly honest person fears none. His or her honesty always speaks of itself. A society which has such laws as the law of defamation and society which provides for Anticipatory Bails is rotten to the core. As its moral fibre is weak, its legal armour is heavy and cumbersome. India to-day is a veritable administrative and legal jungle where corruption and dishonesty prosper. In

such a society, a day is not far off when the people will be afraid of their own shadows.

Four decades of its working convincingly proves that India's Constitution has been systematically sabotaged by its own creatures - Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary. Paradoxically, fence is eating the crop in India. Office of the Prime Minister at the Centre and that of Chief Ministers in the States have been so debased that even the clowns are confident that they can hold them. There goes never-ending rat race to become Ministers at the Centre and in the states.

It is reported that in the midst of grave political crisis and on the verge of its dissolution, the Ninth Lok Sabha has passed the salary, Allowances and Pension of members of Parliament Bill which provides full pension to the members who have completed just one year of their term. (Navhind Times, 13-14th March, 1991) It also increases minimum pension from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1250/- per month and provides maximum pension of Rs. 5000/- per month. Clearly, the representatives are more interested in their own prosperity than in the prosperity of people they profess to represent. The Speaker of the Ninth Lok Sabha also admitted a notice of motion for the removal of the Judge of the Supreme Court on the charges of misappropriation of public funds.

What people of India know about the mis-appropriation of public funds by those holding high Offices in Politics, Civil Services, Diplomacy, Education, Judiciary, Armed Forces and Police is just the tip of the iceberg. The exact shape and size of corruption in India will never come before the public eye as long as the corrupt can take the advantage of the Official Secrets Act and the doctrines of the so-called "Public Interest" and "Contempt of Court". Wither India!