

Special programmes for upgrading the skills of village artisans should be prepared and subsidised loans from financial institutions granted to them for setting up small scale industries. To promote the participation of OBCs in the industrial and business life of the country, a separate net-work of financial and technical institutions should be created by all State Governments.

Under the existing scheme of production-relations, Backward Classes comprising mainly small land holders, tenants, agricultural labour, village artisans, etc., are heavily dependent on the rich peasantry for their sustenance. In view of this, OBCs continue to remain in mental and material bondage of the dominant castes and classes. Unless these production-relations

are radically altered through structural changes and progressive land reforms implemented rigorously all over the country, OBCs will never become truly independent. In view of this, highest priority should be given to radical land reforms by all the States.

At present no Central assistance is available to any State for implementing any welfare measures for Other Backward Classes. Several State Governments expressed their helplessness in undertaking more purposeful development programmes for backward classes in view of lack of resources. It is, therefore, recommended that welfare programmes specially designed for OBC should be financed by the Central Government in the same manner and to the same extent as done in the case of SCs and STs.

Religion Resides in Our Hearts, Not on Throne of Power

V.P. SINGH

The following is the text of Prime Minister V.P. Singh's address to the nation, broadcast and telecast in the night of November 9, 1990, before he laid down office.

Dear Friends,
I have bid goodbye to the government to return once more to you. I look forward to this reunion. I came to the government on issues, and it is on issues I am leaving. The National Front Government has gone but we have not lost our courage. Our courage came from you, and it is this courage that will endure us in our fight for national unity, social and economic justice, and communal harmony.

If some of my actions have pleased you then I feel fulfilled. But if some have angered you, that anger is a part of the burden I must bear. It is your duty and your right to express your displeasure, as it is mine to accept both your anger and your affection. I accept both because I have an abiding faith in your judgement and fairness.

Our country, our society, has been born of the confluence of the greatest religions of the world. Hinduism is, above all, a religion of synthesis. It has united the animate with the inanimate; the soul of one with the soul of all; the *atma* with the *Paramatma*. Islam teaches brotherhood and equality; Christianity lit the lamp of compassion; Buddhism and Jainism brought the message of non-violence; Sikhism opened its doors to the people of all castes, religions and social strata. Where in all this is a conflict? The conflict is elsewhere and religion is only a pretext.

Religion is the lamp of the soul. Let it light your way. Do not use it to ignite the flame of hatred. If you do so, the temple of mother India will be reduced to ashes. I beseech you, do not let this happen. Religion belongs in our hearts, not on the throne of power.

Today, we face the supreme test. We must decide on the basis of principles whether we will uphold the rule of law and the sanctity of our Constitution, or violate them and run the Indian state through force and coercion. Shall religious polarisation divide the country?

Who is opposed to a temple dedicated to Sri Ram built in Ayodhya? But has it to be done in violation of court orders and by breaking down the mosque?

I have sacrificed my government on this one issue. I shall devote my whole life, if necessary, to resolving this dispute. But I want all of you to remember that a resolution that comes out of mutual respect and generosity of spirit will be the strongest foundation of this nation's unity and an abiding testament to religious tolerance. I wish to thank from the bottom of my heart all those who have worked with total sincerity to resolve this problem. I also urge the nation to enact a law in Parliament that will protect the status of every existing mosque, temple or other religious shrine as of a given date, so that no such dispute can arise in the future.

To build our society we must eliminate entrenched injustice and inequality. We must do this not with anger but with compassion; not with confrontation but through cooperation. If some of us are weak or deprived, we must bring them forward. The nation is a family and we must run it, if necessary, by denying ourselves some of our wants — that is the duty of the elder brother to his weaker brethren and that is the basis of social justice.

My government decided to give the youth and the backward classes some concessions. But somehow these were misunderstood and an atmosphere was created in which many young people decided to immolate themselves. My heart will forever be heavy. These were our own children. They turned away from me but how can I turn away from them? The future of every child is the responsibility of us. It is our duty to make him or her a good human being who fights not only for himself or herself but for others. Only those who are capable of rising to this challenge have in them the seeds of greatness.

In this year of social justice dedicated to the memory of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, we tried to light the lamp of hope in the hearts of those who have suffered from thousands of years of discrimination and deprivation. Once I am free of the obligations of the government, I hope to be able to devote myself to instilling courage in them. Our *advais*, who live in

forests and wastelands far from Delhi, have become the forgotten poor of our society, fit only for exploitation. The voice of these people must be heard in Delhi.

I had given a commitment that we would safeguard the dignity of the farmers who work in the fields and on the threshing floors. We gave them better, more just prices for their produce and lightened their burden of debt. But our ambition to forge a national policy for agriculture remained unfulfilled for the lack of time. In this decade of the farmer, we shall continue to fight for his rights.

The National Front Government had wished to give the working classes and the weaker sections of our society not just concessions but a share in decision-making. We wanted women to be represented in the panchayats, labour to have a share in the management, and young people to have a say in the building and running of this country. We had wanted our educated youths to have secure and productive lives. We wanted to safeguard not only their physical but also their

mental well-being. We cannot forget our ex-soldiers. We have done our bit to improve their lot.

While we were able to set right our relations with our neighbours, particularly China, Nepal, Sri Lanka, our problems with Pakistan continue. We want friendly relations with Pakistan but in spite of our best efforts we could not succeed so far. Problems of Punjab, Kashmir and Assam still remain on the national agenda.

I wish to thank all those who gave their support to the National Front Government, specially the Left parties who gave us unflinching support. We are grateful to them.

This is the country of Bapu, of Netaji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia. The ideals of unity and social justice that they put forward before us will be the beacons that will light our future. I have faith in you. I have faith in the nation.

Jai Hind. ○ aus: 'Mainstream', 17.11.90

Sri Lanka

Zwischen dem 27. Oktober und dem 4. November 1990 besuchten zwei Abgeordnete des Europäischen Parlamentes sowie zwei Rechtsanwälte aus Belgien und den Niederlanden Sri Lanka. Nachfolgend veröffentlichen wir ihren Bericht im Wortlaut:

1. Aim of Mission

The mission was organised to complete a report on violation of human rights in Sri Lanka and the disappearance of Sri Lankans.

2. Background

Sri Lanka has had direct universal suffrage since 1931. The UNP (United National Party) replaced the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) in the 1977 election as the governing party of Sri Lanka. The UNP extended its term of office by referendum in 1983 and cancelled the elections which were due to be held. The 1989 elections were held in an atmosphere of intimidation with the nationalist radical JVP calling for a boycott of the election.

Disappearances and extra-judicial executions have been reported with increasing frequency since mid 1983. In addition, in the late 70-s opposition groups engaged in armed struggle to establish a separate Tamil State. From July 1987, armed opposition escalated in the Sinhala majority areas of southern Sri Lanka and were particularly numerous towards the latter half of 1989.

In addition, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Powers Regulations gives power to police and armed forces to arrest and detain suspects without any democratic accountability.

3. Methodology

In order to obtain the widest possible view of the current situation in human rights, we met Members of Parliament across the political spectrum, the State

Minister of Defence, the Army Commander, and representatives of a number of human rights organisations.

We met about 250 relatives of disappeared people and interviewed about 50 families. We have obtained at least 1500 written documented cases of people who have disappeared. Conclusions and findings in this report are restricted to information which was verifiable by verbal testimony or written report. Names and details of address have been omitted to protect the people involved and their relatives.

4. Findings

Reports were received of people who have been taken and their bodies later discovered often burned or mutilated. Other people were taken into custody and disappeared after release from custody. In many cases, people have disappeared without any trace. Families seeking information about their relatives from the police station receive no information and are still waiting to hear.

Various estimates we have received, suggest that at least 60.000 people disappeared in the South of Sri Lanka since 1987. This represents about one in every 250 of the population. This excludes the North and East of Sri Lanka. During our stay, we received reports of continuing disappearances, for example between 20 and 50 per week in the Kandy area since 1990.

A large number of reports were received alleging direct or indirect involvement of the police and armed forces. Sometimes, it appeared that vigilante forces