

THE FUTURE VISTAS

K. N. GOVINDACHARYA

Respected elders and friends! The Srirama Janmabhoomi Temple Movement, popularly known as the Ayodhya Movement has been much discussed, analysed and written about. Nevertheless, I feel that many of the analysts and commentators have not taken cognisance of some of the aspects of this movement. In the movement they see only a macabre vote game indulged in by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) even at the risk of the integrity of the country. Fears are therefore expressed about the future of our nation. Will the country remain united or not? What will happen if the Islamic nations of the world impose an oil embargo on India? What will happen if the minority community, namely the Muslims, take up arms? These and many similar fears are expressed in the context of the possible fallout of the Ayodhya Movement.

A MOVEMENT OF THE PEOPLE

The commentators and analysts assume that the Ayodhya Movement is a movement generated and led by the BJP for its electoral politics, and that is why all these questions arise in their minds. That assumption is simply not true. The Ayodhya Movement is a mass movement. It is a movement of the people, in which participation of the masses has crossed all barriers, including the barriers of differing political persuasions. Ayodhya on December 6 was witness to the participation of large numbers of people, cutting across all political and party affiliations. Even the caste barriers were completely shattered.

This aspect is often not fully taken cognisance of, or appreciated, by those who believe that they, and not the people of India, are the custodians of this nation. The failure leads to many conclusions, which raise panic. A few people seem to have usurped the custody of the country's integrity, security and progress and also

the right to decide upon the shape that the country will attain in the near future. The Ayodhya Movement has raised many questions and fears in their minds.

Two journalist friends recently met me in Delhi and they told me that they were afraid and were preparing themselves to live, for the next twenty years, under fascist rule. They meant that the BJP was poised to come to power and therefore fascism was going to govern the country. All these fears are the result of a superficial understanding of the situation, based on an exaggerated opinion of the role of oneself, or of those like oneself, in determining the fate of the nation and keeping it on course. We need to undertake a deeper appreciation of the situation, only then we may come to any reasonable conclusion about the path the country is going to take.

The first thing to be acknowledged in my view is that the Ayodhya Movement is a mass movement. It is a movement of the people. The people of India, through the medium of the Ayodhya Movement, are trying to re-assert the linkages of the nation with its psyche, with its heritage, its ethos, and its roots. That is the basic motivation of the movement. The movement has arisen out of a continuing drift in Indian polity, caused by our failure to make any effort to heal the deep fractures between the state and the society that had occurred during centuries of alien rule.

The people of India, however, have gradually begun to feel that the system of governance that we inherited from the British is not appropriate for a free nation. That system is anyway showing signs of wear and tear. It is showing itself incapable of steering the society. It is alienated from the society. It doesn't inspire the people to get involved in the process of governing themselves and marching ahead towards progress. It doesn't encompass in its vision the entirety of society. It is not able to reflect the aspirations of the Indian people. It is not able to cope with the needs of the masses of this country.

THE BRITISH LEGACY

The system we inherited from the British is structured on an unbridgeable split between the state and the society. The state wants to protect the interests of only a section of the people of India, and not of the entirety of her masses. The state attempts to move the

nation on one side, in a certain direction, which is delinked from the aspirations of the masses.

We ought to seriously analyse the reasons why we have come to this situation. We in India, before the alien invasions, had certain systems, certain mechanisms, certain modes of governing ourselves, certain checks and balances for steering ourselves. And in those Indian modes and mechanisms of organising and governing ourselves, participation of the entire society was the watchword. We had our own way of looking at things, analysing them, viewing them, and accordingly modifying the super-structures, including the state, in response to different times and different situations. But the alien system of governance, instituted during the British Raj, has led us all into a situation in which the state and the society just do not fit in with each other, the aspirations of the people and the inclinations of the system just do not match. It is like putting a square peg in a round hole.

That is the situation. It is a situation where the aspirations of the masses remain entirely un-reflected in our institutional structures. The people, therefore, do not respond to the various great ideas that seem to have inspired the system. Thus if you hail secularism, shout “Jai Secularism!”, it doesn’t inspire the people. “Jai Democracy!”, perhaps, still inspires to an extent. But all these alien paradigms and idioms, all these great ideas, really do not strike any chord in the hearts of the people of India. They find that no, these ideas are not theirs; this system is not theirs. These ideas and this system represent something else, which they are not able to understand. And because of that the task of galvanising the people, of harnessing their talents and energies for national reconstruction seems to have gotten stuck somewhere.

When one reflects on all these aspects one begins to understand that as part of the British legacy a wayward drift has been introduced in the polity of India. The British brought a system of governance which was probably more suited to the seafaring and trading people of England. It was less suited for the vast expanses and the masses of our country. The system which was implanted on our lands and our people did not suit us.

Before the coming of the British, we had our own systems; we had our own ways of looking at things and governing ourselves. But the British probably thought that we did not have any of these, or

they might have thought that what the Indians had was not suitable. Or they perhaps perceived that those Indian systems of organising and governing ourselves, and looking and comprehending things, provided an intrinsic strength to Indian society, which needed to be broken and shattered for the project of colonisation to succeed.

Therefore, with their own designs they tried to extend their apparatus, totally oblivious and insensitive to the needs of this country and her people. And consequently there began a decline of India in all fields—be it the field of education, where the literacy rate began to fall continuously; or be it the field of industrial production, where the country got almost completely de-industrialised within a few decades of the coming of the British; or be it the field of agricultural production, where the rack-renting of the British started such a steep decline in the productivity of Indian lands as has not been arrested up to this day.

But it is in the field of social governance that the British intervention has left the deepest scars on the Indian polity. The British adopted a policy of divide and rule for the administration of India. They were the first to insist that the Muslims of India were a separate community and the Hindus separate, and that the separation extended to all aspects of public life.

The British recognition of a separate Muslim identity led to a kind of psychological superiority in the minds of the Muslims. They began to feel that they were the favoured ones of the rulers of India. Even at the ground level the British bias showed up, at least in the administrative sense. And that led to more and more cleavage and mental distancing between the Muslims and the Hindus. Those, who had been compatriots till then, began to look towards each other with a sense of distrust, jealousy and ill-will. This began to happen from 1772 onwards, and ultimately it led to the partition of this country. There was a rupture in the relationship between the communities, which led to the direct action of 1946. And then there was partition.

POLITICS OF INDEPENDENT INDIA

Later, in the electoral politics of independent India, vote banks and vote blocks took over. Caste and religion began to play crucial

roles in the number democratic system. This system needed to have many reforms in-built into itself. That was not done. Therefore crass number games and creation of various vote blocks went on. The situation was hardly suitable for reflection of the people's will in the matter of governance. This led to distortions in the polity and further reduced the effectiveness of the state apparatus in catering to the needs of the people.

At the social level too many divisive tendencies started manifesting themselves. Language, region, religion, caste, etc., began to come in handy for dividing the already shattered Indian society and the Indian nation into smaller and smaller fragments. The characteristically diverse attributes of the people of India – belonging to different regions, different castes, and different religions – which used to play the role of preserving the essential plurality within a cohesive whole, began to become the sources for the fomentation of divisive tendencies. The diversities, instead of adding to and enriching the whole, began to eat into the nation. And all this too was the result of the number game politics.

The same thing happened on the economic side. We began to organise all our economic effort on the basis of alien ideas about development – about the meaning of development, and about development for whom and of whom. Following the western notions we began to believe that industrialisation in itself equals development. And technologies developed in the west in a particular context, in the specific context of the imperial stranglehold on the resources and markets of the colonies, began to be transplanted here. Consequently the participation of the people of India in the economic activities of the nation began to decline further.

The economic doctrines that we learnt from the west, and the technologies that we borrowed, tended to cater to the needs of only a section of the Indian people. Therefore, in the economic field also, the cleavage fostered in the Indian society during the colonial times began to deepen. The nation in fact seems to have split into two: an India of some 250 million people, and a Bharat of more than 600 million. The needs, the aspirations, the motivations, the speed, the capacities, in terms of capital mobilisation and skills, and the intellectual faculties of the two became entirely different. And therefore the alienation became even more stark, and the cleavage almost unbridgeable.

When such drift pervaded public life, slowly people began rethinking. They began to ask: Where have we landed ourselves as a nation? The Ayodhya Movement assumed importance in this context. This movement is an appeal to link ones mind to ones roots, to ones ethos, and to begin questioning oneself, to begin seriously asking ourselves as to where are we going, which way, whither? For whom are we doing what we are doing? *Kasmai devaya havisha vidhema?* Which gods are we propitiating? And, what is the way ahead? What is the goal? How do we reach there? These basic questions need to be answered before the nation can confidently begin to move towards its sure destiny. The Ayodhya Movement has oriented the nation towards facing these basic questions.

To many of us, society seems to be at the crossroads. But people, in general, are clear about their destination. The leaders may be debating, but the people want to go in a certain direction. The ways of the people may not seem to be very sophisticated. But they mean to move in a definite direction, and that direction is towards their own roots, which in other words means towards Hindutva. In this context, the Ayodhya Movement assumes the same importance as the Salt Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi. The Salt Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi, like the Ayodhya Movement now, was indeed only a symbol, a gesture! But that symbol was powerful enough to galvanise the minds and energies of all Indians, for the task of driving out the British and striving for, and ultimately attaining, *swa-rajya*.

If you allow me to draw this parallel with the Salt Satyagraha, then the Ayodhya Movement, the movement for the restoration of the glory of Srirama Janmabhoomi, is an appeal to all Indians to link themselves with the Indian ethos, with whatever happen to be the Indian values and the Indian approach towards life. Those values and that Indian approach towards life is what the leaders of the movement mean by Hindutva.

HINDUTVA

What is Hindutva? Hindutva is not a religion. It is not a mode of worship. It is just a way of life, an approach towards life that, of course, also includes modes of worship. Because a mode of worship or religion, after all is a mode of establishing a particular relationship

between man and the maker, and this relationship is often at the root of the differing ways of different peoples and different civilisations.

Looking at the Indian ways of life over centuries and appreciating the Indian understanding of the relationship between man and the Brahman, the creator, certain aspects of Hindutva can be clearly enunciated. First of all, Hindutva means respect for all modes of worship, for all efforts of man to establish and experience the reality of his relationship with the Brahman. Thus we say: *Akasat patitam toyam yatha gachchati sagaram, sarvadeva-namaskarah kesavam pratigachchati*. As all water that falls from the skies reaches the sea, so does worship offered to all gods reaches Kesava.

Secondly, and equally fundamentally, Hindutva implies the belief and the conviction that the same consciousness permeates all animate and inanimate matter. Therefore we say: *Atmanah pratikulani paresham na samacharet. Sangachchadhvam, samvadadhvam, samvo manamsi janatam*. All must take care of each other, because all beings, conscient or otherwise, are manifestations of the Brahman.

Thirdly, Hindutva implies the knowledge that man is not the conqueror of nature, but is a part of nature. Man is one with the rest of creation, he is just one of the multifarious manifestations of Brahman, and none of these manifestations is higher or lower than any other. All of these share in the same divinity. Therefore, all flora and fauna have got equal right to exist upon the face of the earth. For those who believe in Hindutva, all pursuit of happiness, all development and progress – or whatever one may choose to call the human endeavours for living healthily within the given world – have to be carried out in ways that are in tune with nature, that do not disturb the essential harmony of the universe, that do not violate the rita, the inborn order.

Then, among the essential attributes of Hindutva, comes the respect for women. Barring ones own wife, all women are mothers – that is Hindutva. Then there is the emphasis on selflessness. To live for one's own self is an inferior way of living, to live for others is the better way – that too is Hindutva. Renunciation, austerity, restraint on consumption – these are the cornerstones of the Hindu way of life. These are the qualities that in the eyes of a Hindu determine status, prestige and position of a person in the society. For the Hindus, access to physical comforts and the capacity to amass the

tools of physical pleasure are not, and cannot be, the sole determinants of a man's worth.

All these together, all these facets in their entirety, define Hindutva. This is what being a Hindu is all about. Within these over-arching principles of thought and action, an individual naturally lives according to his or her own aptitudes. Everyone fulfils one's own longings, manifests one's own basic traits of personality. And according to one's aptitudes, longings and personal traits, one naturally chooses some God, takes to some form of worship, becomes a part of some group of believers and worshippers, or even chooses not to believe in any God and not to care for any kind of worshipping.

This choice of a God and the form of worship is what is generally called religion. And on religion, in this sense, Hindutva puts no restraints. As far as Hindu thought is concerned, man is born free in these matters. And there are thirty-three crore gods, and equally numerous modes of worship, from which one may choose the god and the mode of worship that particularly appeals to one, or one may even invent a god and a mode of worship of one's own.

Diversity of religions and faiths in this sense does not matter, till the essential Hindu thought of the divinity of all facets of the manifest universe and the need to respect all forms of creation is accepted. What matters is the essential Indian realisation of the relationship between man and the Brahman. How one chooses to realise this relationship in one's own life, whether one chooses this god or that, this method or that, is a matter of no consequence.

BRIDGING THE SPLIT

Based on this visualisation of Hindutva, where do we go? How do we involve other communities of India, the communities that somehow feel separate, in this great Indian civilisational endeavour, referred to by the name of Hindutva. It seems that because of this movement, slowly a process of churning has begun even in the minds of the Muslims. They have begun to feel that the established political leadership of the community has not served the purposes of the community. Slowly, a realisation is dawning among them that they have been left in the lurch. The leaders have flourished, but the community has stagnated. Therefore, whether it is the mat-

ter of literacy, or of health, or of other parameters associated with healthy living in society, the Muslims have not been able to achieve much. They have just been used as pawns in the game of politics. The leaders have treated them as mere vote banks. The politicians were not sensitive enough to treat them as conscient human beings. They treated them merely as mobile votes. That led to distortions in politics, and stagnancy in the Muslim community. And, the Muslims now seem to be getting wise to the situation that the political leaders of various persuasions have created for them.

Now, when this churning is going on, is the proper occasion to start an informal dialogue with the Muslims. We need to have more and more interaction, in an open and cordial atmosphere, between all people, Hindus and Muslims, residing in a particular locality. This dialogue must take place between the people of the locality themselves, directly, not through the brokers, not through the self-proclaimed political leaders of one community or the other.

The people of these communities must sit together, at the very local level, at best at the district level, and sort out the problems between them. It is at that level that the people must discuss: What have been the biases and distortions in the political and the administrative fields? What are the discriminations, for or against, that the people of different communities happen to perceive? Have the Muslims benefited from these biases and discriminations? If yes, then how much and in what ways? And, how can we get over the distortions and the biases? How can we begin to live in harmony with each other? These are the questions that need to be discussed and answered at the local levels.

The Ayodhya Movement has definitely sent this strong message that the state cannot be the custodian in which the security and integrity of a country can be vested. The state apparatus is incapable of standing guarantee for the security and integrity of a nation. Even the highly oppressive and hardened apparatus of the communist state of the U.S.S.R. could not prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. That was a lesson that the state, even of the communist dictatorship variety, cannot guarantee anything if the will of the people is not behind it. Similarly, the Ayodhya Movement has sent out the message that relationships between communities and harmony between them can be vested only in the goodwill and good sense of their immediate neighbourhood. Amicable relationship can be

ensured only by respecting the neighbours' sentiments. Neither the state apparatus, nor the politicians can stand guarantee for the furtherance and progress of any people, whether they be Hindus, Muslims or any others.

This signal that the different communities of India must learn to live amicably through mutual understanding and dialogue at the local level has definitely been sent across by the Ayodhya Movement. And therefore all those individuals, groups and organisations, who feel concerned about national integration, about communal harmony, about respect for the distinct identities of different religious groups, and about cultural assimilation – all those who feel concerned about these matters – should learn to pursue these at the district level, at the block level, and at the local neighbourhood level. It is at that level that efforts for the generation of mutual confidence and understanding must be initiated.

At the level of the neighbourhood and the district, it may even be possible to discuss the appropriate meanings of secularism. It may even be possible to initiate a debate on those basic tenets of Islam, or of any other religion, which in the perception of the neighbours seem contrary to basic human dignity and human rights. It is at that level that the question of how to live together while respecting the sentiments of others can be meaningfully discussed. It is at that level that ways may be found to get over the current competitive assertions of religion, resulting in the Namaz spilling over on the streets, and Maha-aartis coming up in reaction. A dialogue at the level of the neighbourhood and the district alone can provide solutions to such problems. Only by thinking together at the neighbourhood and the local levels shall we learn to think in unison, as component parts of the whole Indian nation.

OPEN VISTAS

In the field of politics, as I said earlier, there is a fracture of the relationship between the state and the society. This too is an indication that in-depth discussion and debate is needed at all levels of Indian society to think about the organisational and institutional structures that would cater to the needs of the people efficiently and efficaciously. Of course, we also have to think about how to ensure na-

tional integrity and national security, while at the same time enlarging and ensuring participation of the people in the state apparatus and power. We have to begin discussing how society can govern itself, how participation of the people at all levels of decision-making and execution can be ensured, without in any way ignoring the concerns of national security in the present-day world.

Can there be better ways of political and administrative functioning? Are improvements not needed in the current ways and methods of governance itself? Should there not be a multi-tier system of political and administrative organisation based on the decentralisation of political power, so that power reaches down to the people and they are involved in the system, not merely as voters, but as participants in the business of governing themselves? Shouldn't we remember and build upon the fact that there has been a strong tradition of self-governance of our own, that our localities and communities have deep-rooted traditions and long experience of governing themselves?

Even now the panchayats, not the almost vacuous statutory panchayats but the traditional panchayats, are functioning effectively in the villages. The statutory governmental panchayats are not taken much cognisance of in the villages. But the traditional panchayats of the communities and the localities still survive in many areas and function as best as they can in the present polity that is intrinsically hostile to their existence and functioning. How can these panchayats be rejuvenated, legitimately empowered and made compatible with our larger polity? What kind of reforms is needed in our public polity and in the statutory arrangements designed to give effect to that polity?

Guru Golwalkarji once said that let the panchayats be effective more and more. Let these include the representatives of all occupations and professions. And instead of voting, let us have consensus and unanimity. Let there be a kind of veto power vested in every representative. Can any such experiments be done? What experiments can be done in the conditions of today, what are the possibilities, and what are the aspects that need to be studied and dealt with? There is an urgent need now to deliberate on all this.

Deendayalji also suggested the five-tier system of governance. In the system of his conception, the central government was to be concerned with only those aspects that impinge upon national de-

fence and the unity and integrity of the country. Then at the zonal level, there were to be Janapadas – not linguistic states, but demographically homogenous and cohesive units – of which there could be nearly a hundred in the country. The cohesiveness and homogeneity of the Janapadas could have ensured promotion and protection of regional characteristics and also invited more enthusiastic participation of the people in the business of legislation and administration. Small, compact blocks were to constitute the next level of administrative and legislative units. And finally, at the core level, there were to be the panchayats, which were to form the most basic and effective units of the polity.

Should we not begin experimenting along these lines now? I feel the time has come to deliberate upon and experiment with these ideas about re-organising the public life and polity of India. Public polity reorganised along a direction that empowers the locality and the community as the basic units of legislation and governance alone would ensure enthusiastic participation of the people in the task of nation building.

Thought has to be given to reorganisation of the economic life of the country also. The time has come when the resources and the needs of 'Bharat' must also be taken into account while thinking about the national economy. An economy built on the basis of the needs, skills and talents of 'India' alone remains too small and too inadequate for the vast and great nation that we are. The economic thinking that is focussed largely only on 'India' and the world outside can do no justice to the greatness of the whole of the Indian nation, and cannot be of much use in the business of national reconstruction and Indian self-assertion in the world of today.

Can there be better methods of economic organisation? Can we start a debate on what we mean by development? Is industrialisation equivalent to development? Does development have no other meaning? In any case, shouldn't we seriously ask questions about the meanings of development: Development of whom, for whom, at what cost and at whose cost? And, can there not be ways of economic organisation of our own? Can we not think of economic development that is measured against parameters other than merely the gross national product?

Is it impossible to ensure the economic well-being of the nation and her people without paying unbearable social, political and environmental costs? Is economic development possible only by crushing the people's initiative and enterprise, and making a few the custodians of all economic activity? Should a few alone be empowered to think about and decide upon what are the needs of the nation and the people? Is it necessary? Is the model of development which seeks and obtains its inspiration from the west the only possible model? Is it a desirable model? Is it even feasible to implement the Indian situation? All these questions need to be asked and answered now.

COMING INTO OUR OWN

In this context the concepts of de-centralisation and swadeshi are of crucial importance. It is essential that we now revert to our native genius. Let us learn to appreciate whatever we have done through the ages, let us learn to be proud of what we have achieved as a civilisation. And, it is time that we begin to document, discuss, deliberate upon and compile our ways and our achievements. We should also probably begin experimenting with our own ways in different fields. We should experiment, gain experience through experiments, and learn more to make our ways compatible with the needs of the times.

We need to have our own economic and political model, our own superstructures, our own checks and balances, to cater to the needs of the Indian people, spread over the vast expanse of our country. We need to have a rational appreciation of our assets and our handicaps. We need to begin thinking in our own terms, in our own language, in terms of our own needs, our aspirations. We need to cure ourselves of the disease of what is called Macaulay-ism – in the field of thought processes, in the field of superstructures, in the field of technology, in the field of consumption, in the field of values of good and bad. Time is now ripe to begin thinking about these issues and begin to reconstitute all aspects of Indian public life. That is the signal of the Ayodhya Movement, the movement that has dared to link itself with the sacred names of Srirama and Ramarajya.

About Ramarajya, Goswami Tulasidas has said, "*Daihika daivika bhautika tapa, Ramaraja kahu nahin vyapa.*" In Ramarajya,

none of the three kinds of tapas, affected the people. There were no sufferings, neither those arising from the actions of the individual, nor the ones arising from the natural forces and nor the ones caused by the supernatural forces. This is important. Getting rid of the sufferings of the people – that is the most important aspect of Ramarajya. And then, of course, Ramarajya was also *dharmikarajya*. Dharmikarajya means that in that rajya nobody felt fear. All were liberated from fear, all felt secure. How do we achieve that state of liberation from fear and liberation from suffering? How do we go about building, *dharmappravana-vyakti*, *dharmadhishtita-samaja*, *dharmaniyantrita-rajya* – individuals keenly observant of dharma, communities and societies securely established in dharma and the state governed by dharma? To begin reconstituting the polity in that direction is the message of the Ayodhya Movement, symbolised by Srirama.

DISCUSSION

Ayodhya Movement and Hindu society

MARIWALA: I feel somewhat uneasy. I realise that we have a Muslim problem, because of the partition and, before that, because of the policies of the British. But it seems that even amongst the Hindus the Ayodhya Movement has brought together only a few sections of the people. Most of them belong only to the upper castes among the Hindus. And I am afraid this is going to lead to more divisions and further tension within the society.

GOVINDACHARYA: My experience of the composition of the participants in this movement does not tally with the perception that the activists belong only to the forward castes. The movement has been able to transcend caste barriers, and includes vast sections of society, including the Harijans, the tribals, and members of what you term the *Avoidikadarsana communities* – the Jains, the Buddhists and the others. In fact, far from bringing the social fabric of the country under divisive pressures, the movement has helped in forg-

ing links and bonds of unity across the country and across different castes and communities. This is the perception and experience of the people who are closely involved with the movement.

As far as Muslims are concerned, my feeling is that the message of Hindutva and the bond of Hindutva encompass them as well. Hindutva transcends the compartments of religion and encompasses varieties of modes of worship, including of those who believe in Allah Nabi and in Jesus Christ. Hindutva embraces them all.

The Ayodhya Movement has indeed generated a debate about the approach of Islam towards the 'infidels'. Is it proper and rational for any religion to hold itself as the sole arbiter of the relationship between man and the maker? This basic debate also has been initiated in this country which in due course will lead to the evolution of an Indian variant of Islam, a variant that would rectify the serious threat of Islam as an intolerant ideology and as an oppressive state-craft, and thus contribute to better harmony, not only within India, but also in the larger world community. This is the vision that I hold.

RADHA RAJAN: You have said that the Ayodhya Movement is a mass movement, which is not particularly tied to the ideology or the fortunes of the BJP as a political party. But, human nature being what it is, it is generally not possible to create a mass movement around a positive issue. Mass movements are usually targeted against a common enemy. What is your perception of the Ayodhya Movement? Does it have a positive objective, or is it merely targeting the minorities as the common enemy in order to mobilise the people? In the latter case also it does not have to be confined to any one section of the Indian society. Perception of the minorities as the common enemy may, in fact, lead to the breaking of caste divisions, and mobilisation of the entire Hindu community in unison. Is that the real character of the movement?

GOVINDACHARYA: My feeling is that basically the movement is directed towards nation building, towards rejuvenation of the whole society for the tasks of self-governance and collective pursuit of happiness. I do not agree with the perception that it is targeted against the minorities. It of course tends to rectify the distortions introduced in the body politic through the politics of vote banks and minority appeasement. This is indeed a strong aspect of the movement. But it is not the only aspect.

Rectification of distortions in the electoral politics – which tend to pamper certain sections of the political leadership for the reasons of vote, while keeping the masses, both Hindus and Muslims, caught in an abyss of poverty, exploitation, inequality and unemployment – is indeed a strong aspect of the movement. The movement is targeted against those distortions, not against a particular community.

Ayodhya movement and the salt satyagraha

RADHIKA: Sir, you have drawn an analogy between Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha and the Ayodhya Movement. I think at that time there was a clear understanding that Gandhiji's movement was against the British rule and not against the British. Mahatma Gandhi was willing to take moral responsibility for any violent aberrations appearing in the movement. In the case of the Ayodhya Movement has it been made sufficiently clear to the participants and the supporters that the movement is not against any particular group, and that regeneration of the whole nation is the objective? And who is taking moral responsibility for the aberrations?

GOVINDACHARYA: The happenings of December 6, 1992, at Ayodhya were unexpected, during which the masses who had congregated there defied the appeals of their leaders. Lal Krishna Advani himself took the responsibility for those events, and as an act of atonement he resigned from the position of the leader of the opposition in parliament. The events also led to much more serious thinking among the leaders of the movement about its course and objectives. But, in spite of all this, various expressions of the movement may not be always as sophisticated as one may wish for. One should always make an allowance for some lack of sophistication in the diverse expressions of a mass movement.

RADHA RAJAN: You have told us that the Salt Satyagraha and the Ayodhya Movement are similar in that both of them are symbolic of larger movements of society. Using some issue or object as a symbol implies that once the protest is lodged and attention is focussed, then the symbol may be dropped. The Salt Satyagraha did not take the place of the Freedom Movement; it was merely symbolic of the movement. Have the BJP and the RSS and those who are in the movement gone any farther than the symbol? And if so, why is it

that little is being talked about the strides the movement may have made beyond the symbolic restoration of the temple, and towards a comprehensive national revival?

GOVINDACHARYA: One has to proceed step by step. First Srirama Mandir, then Ramarajya. We have been trying to explain the meaning of Ramarajya. It does not mean a theocratic state, it means much more than that. Then, of course, comes the issue of national identity. We have been trying to explain the meaning of national identity, of national assertion. We have been trying to insist upon the application of these concepts in various fields of national life.

It is such ideas, the idea of Ramarajya, and that of national identity and national assertion, that would generate the forces of change in different fields of national life. I agree that these aspects need to be further explained and emphasised. But what gets emphasised in a movement at a particular point of time depends upon the prevailing atmosphere and on the intensity of the struggle. Till now, up to the 6th of December, we were in the first phase of the struggle. Now I think the horizon will be much wider. And there will be much more scope to think about and mobilise around the idea of a comprehensive national resurgence.

Temples and spirituality

TULJAPURKAR: Sir, are we not reading too much into this movement? Of course we know that a great temple was destroyed in Ayodhya and a mosque was built. The mosque was an eyesore, and the Ayodhya Movement has succeeded in destroying that mosque. But what is there to assume that this is going to lead to the kind of revival that you are projecting?

A temple will indeed come up, and it probably needs to be built in order to correct the distortions that have crept into the polity. But there are temples and temples in the country, and they hardly seem to be any kind of centres for spiritual advancement. Most of the people who go to the temples ask the deity for material riches, or a child, or some such other thing, but nobody seeks spiritual advancement there. There is not much concern for even keeping the environs of the temples clean and managing them well. The Srirama temple that will come up in Ayodhya would also probably become another

place where people go to seek fulfilment of their petty concerns, oblivious of the physical and spiritual filth all around them.

GOVINDACHARYA: If one is able to appreciate the *bhava* of the *bhaktas*, the innermost feelings of the devotees, then the exterior aspects of the temple management may not seem that important. If the temples are cleaner and better managed, if the participation of the *bhaktas* in the activities of the temple is enhanced, it would definitely add to the fulfilment of the visitors. But one should attach some importance to the *bhava* of the *bhaktas* also.

And, merely improvements in the management of the temples or better upkeep of their environs cannot in themselves promote spiritual advancement of the country in general. For that something more would be required.

We should also remember that temples have got their own appeal in the minds of the people. The ways of the people, their attachments, their modes of participation in the festivities of the temple, their methods of worship, may not be quite in consonance with the sophisticated spirituality of the enlightened and the educated people. But that does not mean that the less articulate people, the people who cannot read and write, are not spiritually advanced. Those things need not go together. Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa was not much educated in the usual sense of literal education. Education and spirituality need not always go together.

As for your other question, I believe that the Ayodhya Movement is a movement of national self-assertion, not merely a movement for the restoration of the temple. And definitely it will have its impact on different fields of national endeavour. It is bound to have such impact. It cannot merely end in the construction of one temple. I feel it will have a multidimensional impact. It has already generated immense enthusiasm and initiative for national resurgence.

BAJAJ: May I add a little to this discussion. It seems that Arthur Koestler, a western mystic, had once asked the Paramacharya of Kanchi the question that you have asked Govindacharya today. Koestler felt that the temples that he had gone around in India seemed to be so filthy, so crowded and so dirty, that they could not have offered any spiritual solace to the visitors. The Paramacharya's answer was – I may be not be entirely correct in my interpretation, but what the seer seemed to be saying was – that for the Indians the temple is not a spiritual centre, it is not a place for meditation.

For them it is the material abode of gods on earth. The fact of there being a temple in a town is enough to suffuse the people of the town with the feeling that they are living amongst the gods. They do not even have to go to the temple, according to the Paramacharya, in order to have this feeling. It is enough that the temple bells announce that the gods have woken up, or have bathed, or have eaten, etc. That knowledge is enough for them to approach the various activities and pleasures of the world with the attitude of sharing in the *prasadam* of gods.¹

K. PREMA: I cannot agree that the temples do not serve a spiritual purpose. And, we cannot say that everybody who goes and breaks a coconut in a temple does it for seeking this thing or that thing. People do not go to the temples with such selfishness in mind. It is wrong for us Indians to think like this and raise such doubts.

Temples are in fact centres of social integration. For example, *after the ratha*, the sacred chariot, of Avinasi Temple got burnt, so much money and effort have been put in to rebuild it. Would people have done it if they had no faith in the temples? It is not only the rich, who are involved in restructuring the ratha, people from all levels of society are involved. They could have said what is gone is gone. Why did they put in so much effort and energy in making a new chariot of the same kind?

India's integrity is woven around the temples. No wonder that the current battle for the resurgence of India is also being fought around a temple. A big battle is going on for this temple. How can we question the sincerity of the faith of the people in the temples, and the role the temples play in the spiritual well-being of society? GOVINDACHARYA: I respect your faith. I may, however, add that we Indians express our faith in the divine in various ways. We all know about *saguna upasana* and *nirguna upasana*, about the worship of the manifest and un-manifest divinity. And we know the story of Sri Narayana Guru, who raised a temple to Siva and put a mirror in place of the idol. Indian thought encompasses all these stages of upasana.

¹[The views of the Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham on the place of temples in Hindu society, as recorded by Arthur Koestler, are reproduced in Supplementary Note 6, pp. 256-7.-ed.]

Learning from the past

THIAGARAJAN: Sir, listening to you, I have the feeling that the rejuvenation of Indian society will have a lot to do with going back to the past, with understanding how the Hindu ethos, or the ethos of the people, as you put it, expressed itself in the social and political institutions, and in sciences, technologies and commerce, etc. You seem to suggest that going back to the past and understanding how the past worked will somehow help us in solving our current problems.

Now, certainly we have a borrowed system, borrowed from the west. You say that we have not been able to put this borrowed system to any use for solving our problems, and so we must turn to our past. But this shall amount to once again giving up on our responsibilities, and borrowing another system, this time not from another people but from another age. Just as the western system was invented for a different society under very different conditions, it seems to me that this system of the past that you are talking about also was evolved in a very different age, under very different circumstances, and probably for a very different continent altogether.

It seems to me that by talking about reviving the past we are seeking to replace one borrowed system with another borrowed system, which also may not fit our present needs.

GOVINDACHARYA: I am not advocating the implementation of an exact replica of the Indian system of the past. I am not for imitation, not even of our ancestors. I am only insisting that while thinking about the reconstruction of India one should always keep in mind that this country has functioned effectively for centuries and there is something of importance to be learnt from the way it organised and worked within herself. I am not saying that all that is old is gold. But let us also stop believing that all that comes from the west is panacea for us.

I recommend learning from our past experiences and achievements, retaining whatever is likely to be an asset for the future, and rejecting that which has become outdated. Of course, we should learn whatever is of use to us in the experiences of others as well. What is required is an appraisal of our past and present in an objective manner, neither with the prejudice against ourselves, that we have been always as depressed as we are today and therefore salva-

tion is possible for us only in imitation of the west, nor with any blind attachment with ourselves, assuming that all that is past was necessarily good. We have to assess what are our assets as Indians, what are the liabilities of the past, and what are the new things which we have to learn from others. In short what I am advocating is discretion, discretion in assessing ourselves and the world, and working out a plan for the regeneration of India within the situation of the world today. What I am looking for is not merely an Indian revival, but an Indian renaissance.

Reassuring the minorities

SEETHARAMAN: There is a substantial number of Muslims in our country, and any development that we plan to make in the next ten or fifteen years cannot be accomplished without the participation of the Muslims and other minorities. The BJP has given the impression that it stands only for the majority and it is against the minorities for various reasons. This impression must be corrected. If this is not done within the next few months, it may lead to a permanent rift between the Muslims and the Hindus. In that case, even if the BJP comes to power in the centre or in a number of states, it shall be of no use to the party or the nation, because this cleavage among the communities will persist, and it will make it impossible for the country to progress in any direction.

I would like to know what steps the BJP is taking to directly approach the Muslims, the poorer Muslims, not their religious leaders, nor the Imams, nor the various people in positions of power, but the common man among the Muslims. What is it doing in order to convince the lay Muslim that the BJP is not against him, that it is not against any particular religion, that its fight is for the common welfare of the whole country, and that he should join with the BJP in this struggle for the sake of the progress of the whole nation?

Govindacharya: What you suggest needs to be done. But there are constraints in the way of the BJP approaching the Muslims directly. First, some political parties are indulging in spreading canards against the BJP. They are criticising the BJP for things that the BJP has never done, or intends to do. But, the situation is such that some political parties will continue to indulge in this kind of communal propoganda, and till now these parties have had more

access to the Muslim community than the BJP. This handicap has to be admitted. Secondly, we in the BJP have to first educate our workers that our battle is not against the minorities, but against minority-ism. This we have been trying to do and I can claim that we have been quite successful in it. Thirdly, mere contact and dialogue does not cut much ice. It must be proved in practice that minority-ism would not pay. During the last elections to the Uttar Pradesh assembly, it was proved that minority votes cannot decide the outcome. Once such lessons are clearly learnt then the possibilities of a meaningful dialogue will become brighter.

But I must say that we should not be obsessed with the Muslims. Paying more than the required attention to this issue is also counter productive. Our track record is good enough to restore confidence in the minds of the minorities. During the BJP regime, the state of law and order in Uttar Pradesh and other states has been excellent, and that should reassure the minorities of the intentions of the BJP. Of course, we also need to undertake special steps to ensure participation of the minorities in the developmental efforts. In Uttar Pradesh it was tried, but we shall have to do much more in this direction when we come to power again.

There are indeed constraints in the BJP's efforts to arrive at a rapprochement with the minorities, but given our track record and the sincerity of our efforts and intentions we shall definitely succeed. Since our intentions are good, enhanced efforts on our part would certainly lead to better results.

Till now the Muslim community wanted to interact and have a dialogue with others only through its leaders. Now at the ground level, at the district level and the block level, some open and amicable dialogue is being pursued. In many places, Muslims also have been coming forward on their own. They are saying that for an unnecessary non-issue the security of their lives and property has been endangered. They have begun to feel and say that they need not have any problems at the level of their own locality and the district, irrespective of what happens in Ayodhya. This kind of agreement has indeed been struck in various districts of Uttar Pradesh. Similar attempts can be made in other places. In fact in Uttar Pradesh even the district level political leaders of the Muslim community are now seeking a conciliatory approach. That is a heartening feature of the post-December 6 developments.

Minority apprehensions may be genuine

SOUNDARARAJAN: But the minorities do seem to have deep apprehensions following the events of Ayodhya.

GOVINDACHARYA: To some extent the apprehensions are also genuine. Despite all intentions of the leadership that the struggle should be against minority-ism and not against individual members of the minorities, people do go wrong at the ground level. And, at many places the ordinary Muslim in the neighbourhood becomes the symbol of minority-ism. This is to be rectified. Care and caution need to be exercised by all concerned.

But the reactions of the people cannot be always predicted or controlled. When the people take a task in their hands, their ways of dealing with it are not always as sophisticated as we would wish for. Of course this cannot be the excuse – should not be the excuse – for laxity on the part of the leaders. The leaders of the movement have to be particularly vigilant, and they should definitely take every precaution, so that the minds of the cadre do not drift into undesirable directions.

BHARATAN: Sir, of late we see some sort of soul-searching and rethinking amongst the Muslims. Is this because they feel that their survival is threatened, or are they rethinking about the entire concept of the Indian nation and their role and place in it? At any rate do you think that the current rethinking amongst Muslims would at some stage lead to serious introspection and re-evaluation of their conceptions of the Indian nation?

GOVINDACHARYA: I am optimistic in this matter, because of two reasons: One, the innate ethos of this land, which tends to assimilate all others within the geo-political and cultural unity of India, while at the same time allowing them to preserve their special religious and other identities. Two, the good intentions, and the sanity and maturity of the leadership of the Ayodhya Movement. These two aspects guarantee that the movement will never go off the right direction.

It does not matter whether introspection amongst the minorities is motivated by the instinct of survival, or by the noble intentions of participating in the task of regenerating the Indian nation. The motivations will not much affect the consequences. If the minorities begin to take steps towards assimilating themselves within the

larger ethos, motivated by nothing more than a sheer sense of survival, it will still be good for the nation.

Invoking the name of Srirama

MEHROTRA: Sir, with respect to your governments in the northern states, all that you may claim is that these were marginally better than the Congress governments. I wonder whether it is really worthwhile to bring the name of Srirama into the picture, if all that is aimed at is a marginal improvement in governance.

GOVINDACHARYA: I agree. In this aspect we have to do a lot. Very little has been done. Very little could be done. To be better and different in the matter of governance, we need to do much more both at the level of ideas and at the level of implementation. What we can, however, claim is that we are aware of the need and are alive to the situation, and we admit the lacunae and the handicaps. With all good intentions, we are making efforts in the desired direction – only that much can be claimed. And, of course, we have a long, long way to go.

UDAYASANKAR: My question is regarding the norms of behaviour and dignity in public life, which should characterise any party which identifies itself with the sacred name of Srirama. Sadly, to me the archetypal BJP politician at the grass-root level does not seem any different from the archetypal Congress politician. They seem to be all equally corrupt, callous and dishonest. What steps does the party high command plan to take or has taken to alter this image?

GOVINDACHARYA: We are dedicated to making the party a better and effective instrument for social change. We have not fully succeeded in this task, I agree with that. As I said earlier we have a long, long way to go.

I only wish to add that in whatever haphazard manner we are able to function, we are doing it with transparent good intentions. To improve and optimise the level of our functioning it will be better if more persons of higher motivation and greater competence join in the endeavour. That alone can make the party a better and more effective instrument for social change. Of course, critics are useful, but the need of the hour is of those who both criticise and participate. I am not saying this with partisan interests in mind. But

I feel that if more and more persons, with the right intentions and competence, join in this effort, then it will lead to the betterment of society.

Concrete plans for nation-building

C. N. KRISHNAN: I am a little disoriented. I am not sure whether you have spoken of the vision of the future India as a representative of your party or in your personal capacity.

Of course, I am very happy to have listened to your presentation of this vision, and personally I find it highly agreeable. But does the party share the vision? During your presentation many times you said that this is what you think, and probably this is not shared by the party. But our concern mainly has to be with what the BJP as a party is thinking of, and with what the party plans to do.

There is another aspect of your presentation that disappoints me. What you seem to have essentially said is that there must be debates on a number of questions concerning national reconstruction. There must be a debate on what industry we should have, there must be a debate on what agriculture we should have, there must be a debate on what kind of political structures we should have, and so on. We have all been talking about the need for such debates for a long time. But where and when are we going to debate all this? Hasn't somebody debated all this? Isn't there anything that we can agree upon and decide to implement?

I also want to comment upon another matter that you have presented rather forcefully. You said that we should talk to the ordinary Muslims and not to their leaders. This is a very odd assertion. It is not, it cannot be, for us to say who the Muslims should have as their leaders. If you do not talk to the leaders they have chosen, then they will also refuse to talk to you. I feel very strongly about it. You have to give them the autonomy to decide who their leaders are. Let them change their leaders, if they want. But for us to say that we shall not talk to them unless they change them is absurd. It amounts to disarming a group before opening a dialogue with it. I have personally suffered from such tactics. I have been a bit of a trade union man, in a small way, in my younger days. And I remember the authorities used to tell us that they would not

talk to us, the leaders, but that they would talk to our people. This I felt was atrocious reasoning, and I feel the same now when you speak about not talking to the leaders of the Muslims.

GOVINDACHARYA: Regarding your confusion about whether what I said represented my personal views or those of the party, let me say that though I may have stated certain views in my peculiar individual fashion, but to the best of my knowledge I believe that the party also thinks on the same lines.

Your disappointment with my failure to sketch out concrete plans of immediate action for social change is of course understandable. But there is no gainsaying the fact that on these issues much more homework is needed. And when I said we should debate on these issues I wished to emphasise that we need to do more and more homework, we should have more and more forums, more and more cells, to think about these matters. Through such debates, and through the working of such forums and cells, the issues and the lines of attack will hopefully become more concrete and more specific. Then we shall be able to go beyond merely debating and sketching the outline. In this respect, as far as my information goes, we in the party are in a very preliminary stage. You may say that we can't afford to be. You will be right. But the fact of the matter is that we are. I know that you are disappointed; I too am disappointed to some extent. But, the only way is to improve. And that is what we are trying to do with the best of our ability and capacity. And if this effort is to be augmented, it is for others who think on the same lines to help in the task.

Now coming to your question about the need to deal directly with the Muslim leadership: the Muslim leadership has been rejected by the Muslims, that is what we feel, when we go to interact with the Muslim masses. They do not hold much respect, or repute or authority with the Muslims now. And, in any case, who made them the leaders? They first became the self-proclaimed leaders, and then the state apparatus conferred this status on them. The state conferred them with all privileges and comforts, including vehicles and money, to negotiate on behalf of the Muslim community. The case is not similar to the leadership of trade unions, which have a different grammar of relationship with the workers in a particular industry.

Therefore I suggest talking directly to the people at the ground

level, and I think that can better ensure an atmosphere of amity and brotherhood in the society. Merely running after the established leadership and having more and more tensions in the society is not going to be of any use. Because, these leaders do not think in terms of the good of the Muslim community – I can tell you that. For example when the Naib Imam gave the call for boycott of the Republic Day, it was not for the sake of the community, it was for other, grosser reasons. I happen to have the exact information about his motivations and reasons; I do not want to mention these in detail. But he tried to bring the whole community into unnecessary dispute. The common Muslim did not intend to boycott the Republic Day at all. The leaders made him appear like that. And the leaders, motivated by completely extraneous interests, played a sinister game on him.

Political parties and societal urges

JHUNJHUNWALA: You talked about the problems of our country. Most of these problems, as you pointed out, are related to our being severed from our own roots. How and when this happened cannot be said with any certainty. But, the British definitely had a lot to do with severing us from ourselves, and bringing us to this state of drift and rootlessness. Unfortunately we have continued with the methods and institutions of the imperial British administration in India. Our thought processes also have been largely oriented towards the west. And, not surprisingly, these imitative ways of thinking and public functioning have failed to bring about any great resurgence of the Indian nation.

I and some of my friends have been looking at the situation from this perspective and have been trying to look for ways out of the quagmire. I am happy to note that you share this perspective with us, and you are also keenly searching for a way that would free us from our gross dependence on alien ways of thinking, on alien technologies, on alien institutions and organisations of the state and society, and on alien ways of doing things, in general.

I however wish to sound a note of caution. This lifting up of the Indian nation by the bootstraps as it were, this coming back of India into herself, is a very difficult task. Because, almost all institutions,

organisations and technologies through which India expressed herself in the domain of public functioning in the material world seem to have been completely shattered by the alien onslaughts of the last few centuries. The task of Indian resurgence therefore seems almost impossible. I and my friends have been trying to search, for the last almost 15 years, for the Indian ways that may prove to be viable alternatives to the current imitations of the west. And to many of us it seems that as of now we do not even have a clear outline of the alternatives. For me at least, all this is still, I would say, at the level of mere slogans.

When such is the state of things, when the way ahead does not seem to be clear at all, is it proper to tie the search with the fortunes of any political party? Do you think that it would lead to any good if in the public mind all efforts towards working out ways of national regeneration and renaissance come to be associated with the BJP?

GOVINDACHARYA: I entirely agree with you that the situation of *ra-janiyantrita-samaja* – the situation when society comes to be controlled by the state – should be abhorred, avoided and countered. All efforts for rejuvenation and reconstruction of the nation should not be put in the basket of any single political party, not even in the basket of the BJP. Mass organisations in various fields and different institutions for doing intense homework should be built up. These institutions should be available for providing consultation and guidance to different political parties, but they should never be under the thumb, or even in the control, of any political party. It is a prerequisite for the progress of the society, and also for the health of the political parties.

We need independent institutions that would be watchdogs of democracy and that would keep an eye on the functioning of the political parties. We need to give more power and more authority to the society as a whole and its institutions, and not to the state. Political parties, which necessarily are mere limbs of the state, should not come to control the institutions of the society and the individuals, who are dedicated to the idea of social regeneration. This is what I believe.

And, as you rightly said, much more homework, much more intense effort at the micro level, is needed to understand the resources available to us for the reassertion of Indian ways in the present day

world. But we also need to begin working at the macro-level, we need to draw some outlines of the larger model built around the diverse Indian ways of doing and organising things at the micro-level. We need to begin concretising our thoughts for the macro-level re-organisation of Indian society and polity. This is an immediate need. Incidentally, I believe that Indian political parties, including my party, are presently incapable of fulfilling this need. Therefore, much more work is to be done by all; and this work has to be outside the gamut of political parties.

But those working along these lines should have some interaction with different political parties. Such interaction helps all, it helps the thinkers in making their thoughts somewhat more concrete, and it helps the political parties. It helps the latter not in their search for power, because the game of acquiring and retaining power is different, but in working out what is to be done after coming into power, how the state apparatus is to be utilised for the progress of the nation. Autonomous, non-partisan, capable and strong institutions and mass organisations are definitely of help in making political parties undertake the task of national regeneration and in showing them ways of going about this task. I think the question of interaction with the political parties should be looked upon from this perspective.

Economic and technological priorities

AMBADI: Sir, you said that instead of continuing to use parameters like the gross national product or the rate of growth, we should evolve other ways for measuring the progress of the nation and for deciding upon our aims and targets. You also said that we shall have to rethink about what kind of structural arrangements and technologies we are going to employ in our task.

In a country which has got a per capita income of around 3,000 per annum, and where poverty is the most pervasive of human conditions, the gross national product and the per capita income, I believe, have to be given overriding importance. We may make some changes in the matter of institutional arrangements of the polity, we may go back to the past, have the panchayat system if we are so inclined, insist upon consensus in decision-making at the local level,

and so on. But there are no choices that we have in the matter of economic growth and technological modernisation. Since technology crosses frontiers, and since communications have now become so fast that the movement of technology is now almost impossible to stop, we have to adopt the latest technologies available in the international market, whether we like it or not. What choice have we got in this matter?

We may, of course, have a little appropriate technology here and there; we may choose to use a particular machine in place of another, instead of using nuclear power we may, let us say, use solar power or coal. But there is not much choice available, particularly when we look at the problem within the context of national security. Purely for the reasons of national security – national security considered in a comprehensive sense, not merely as the security of the borders – the choices in the matter of technology are very limited.

GOVINDACHARYA: Economic objectives and priorities of the nation can be easily defined. We have to ensure, first, national defence, second, fulfilment of the basic needs of the people, especially of the poorest of the poor, and third, work for every hand. The kind of economic activity and the technologies that would fulfil these objectives have to be worked out.

To me it seems that the fulfilment of these objectives would require, in many sectors, technologies other than what are available in the international market-places. The prevalent technologies designed for centralised and large-scale production are unlikely to prove suitable for us in most sectors. But there are some sectors in which we would need the latest available technologies, and in these sectors we need not shy away from learning from others. And in such cases, we should not only learn from others but go beyond them. We shall have to adopt this posture in the matter of technologies related to, for example, defence, electronics, telecommunications, etc. In these fields, we should probably learn whatever needs to be learnt from others, and then seriously get down to the task of making ourselves the best in the world.

There can be no objection to learning. As we say: *Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah*. But merely imitating, or aping and creating gross carbon copies of others' work has to be definitely avoided. I do not want to deny the importance of technology in its own sphere. But I do want to state that imitation and aping can be of no help in

any task of national regeneration. This attitude of imitating others and assuming that whatever is available anywhere in the world must be brought here in the name of technological up-gradation has to be gotten rid of.