CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

The working of parliamentary democracy is a bold experiment which people of the land have undertaken to transform its shape and build a new India. The task of this nation building is not only colossal but tremendously difficult as finding a solution for our social and economic animosities without dictatorial regimentation is a challenge of its own kind.

Despite that a good number of years have passed since independence and our democracy has had sufficient time to prove its merit and worth to the people of the country in order to gain their confidence yet keeping in view the gigantic objectives to accomplish and aims to achieve the period is not enough to give us the last verdict about the worth and values of the Parliamentary system itself.

"The two processes that are indispensable to the growth of the people and its institutions are the process of change and adjustment." India is learning, albeit, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes cheerfully, the hard lesson on human history - that of change and adjustments. The change is an
indispensable to the growth of the personality of a people as to that of its institutions. The Indian populace is positively changing and growing for a static and decaying society cannot handle any live, vital or dynamic institution of governance. Parliamentary institution of the country is in a process of molten frame and thus not impregnable. It is growing every day with the growing consciousness and potentialities of the masses. Its basic objective is to establish a democratic, secular republic with a view to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity to all its citizens. It aims to translate into practice, the noble concept of a cooperative commonwealth, a blending of political democracy with economic and social democracy and thus ensure the establishment of a welfare State.

The working of Parliamentary democracy in our country despite of its record of achievement and success has on its fair face certain blemishes and indelible stigmas as well. The dark patches, the deficiencies, mala-adjustments and overall short comings are in no way insignificant. The impact of these disabilities of our Parliamentary institution is so deeply felt on the various walks of the country's life that the vast populace both political conscious well as ignorant is fastly getting dissatisfied and disillusioned
from our constitutional life. Taking recourse to some of the alternatives to the Parliamentary system has already became a subject of serious thinking in the political circle of the country.

With Congress holding four-fifth of the seats in VIIIth Lok Sabha, Rajiv had the power to amend India's constitution though he could not be always sure of similar majority in the upper house; the Rajya Sabha, whose members are elected by an altogether different system. In keeping with his pledge to introduce electoral reforms one of his first parliamentary bills amended the constitution by providing for the expulsion from either parliamentary house, or any State Assembly of any elected member who changed parties. If an elected member was to defect from his party, he would lose the right to sit in the chamber unless more than one third of elected members of a party were involved in defection, in which case it was regarded as a party split.

In Brabourne Stadium in Bombay in December, 1985 Rajiv launched one of the boldest initiative of his political career. After referring to his limited political experience saying he was a mere apprentice in the great school of politics, he took his fellow members of Congress to task for allowing the party to lose touch with the masses of India. He told
delegates, "We are a party of social transformation, but with our preoccupation with governance we are drifting away from the people." He complained of the brokers of power and influence who ride on the backs of millions of ordinary Congress workers, dispensing patronage to convert a mass movement into a feudal oligarchy. These self-perpetuating appendages, he went on, "are reducing the Congress organisation to a shell from which the former spirit of service and sacrifice has been emptied... We talk of high principles and lofty ideals needed to build a strong and prosperous India, but we obey no discipline, no rule, follow no principle of public morality, display no sense of social awareness, show no concern for public need, corruption is not only tolerated but even regarded as the hallmark of leadership. Flagrant contradiction between what we say and what we do has become our way of life. At every step, our aims and action conflict. At every stage, our private self crushes our social commitments."

After winning his massive mandate Rajiv declared, "There can't be any concern to separtist ideologies or to the cult of violence." Within ten months of coming to power, Rajiv appeared to have made breakthroughs towards solving the disputes in both states in punjab and Assam and went on to reach accords with other agitating and potentially secess-ionist communities. However, making the accords work proved
to be the greater challenge and one which in the case of Punjab defixed him.

The Anandpur Sahib resolution demands for greater recognition of the separateness of the Sikh faith were closely interwoven with two more down to earth demands. These had nothing to do with Sikhdom as such, but concerned the sharing out of resources when the two new states were separated from Punjab in 1968. Punjabis believed, they had poor deal in the division of river waters, one of two resources (energy was an other) whose shortage was hindering the expansion of agricultural output. Punjab is the home state of India's green resolution and the granary of North India; so its framers thought their state deserved more water. Punjabis also wanted Indira Gandhi to fulfil the promise she made after Punjab was divided in 1968 - that the state capital Chandigarh built by Nehru after Lahore went to Pakistan, become exclusively Punjab's capital instead of sharing with the neighbouring Haryana.

In July, 1985 Rajiv announced a Punjab settlement and proceeded to sign a peace accord with the leader of one wing of Akali Dal, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. At the signing ceremony, the two signatories, Rajiv and Sant Longowal were perhaps tempting providence with their declaration that this
settlement brings to an end of a period of confrontation and ushers an era of amity, goodwill and cooperation which will promote and strengthen the Unity of India.

The accord promised Punjab exclusive use of state capital, Chandigarh, on return for some compensatory territory which was to be given to Haryana. It also provided for the setting up of a Commission to adjudicate on the sharing of river waters between Punjab and Haryana and another State Rajasthan and referring the Anandpur Sahib autonomy demands to the Sarkaria Commission, which was already looking into the relationships between Centre and State governments. The accord also appeared to remove an unacknowledged quota restricting the recruitment of Sikhs into the Indian Army and to offer some rehabilitation though not reinstatement for post Blue Star mutineers.

The basic attitude the Parliament adopted was what Rajiv asked the Parliament for its support, "We must adjust and accommodate on political aspect of the problem whilst at the same time, we must be very firm where there is any question of using violence towards those ends."

In elections which took place on 25th September, 1985, an Akali Dal State Government was formed under Surjeet Singh Barnala, who had succeeded Sant Longowal at the head of the
moderate wing of the party. This brought to an end of years of Central rule in Punjab. Though Congress had been soundly defeated, Rajiv praised the result as a victory for democracy over terrorism, say it was more important to restore democratic government than for any particular party to win.

One of the most important controversy which remains to be properly resolved in the working of our Parliamentary life is the danger to the democratic structure of our country by the exercise of emergency powers, by the party government at the centre. The President has liberally exercised the power of suspending State Governments in exercise of his emergency powers in the State's sphere in accordance with the provisions of Article 356.

The circumstances and manner in which the emergency powers were exercised in all these cases gave an impression to the politically conscious people that the democracy was rough-shed by the Union Cabinet for its own political motive and prejudices. These instances are proof positive about the contention that emergency provisions of the constitution may at times be used for party purposes and there is a risk of the parliament playing the role of second fiddle to the cabinet manoeuvres. In such a development, the President is the
saviour of the Constitution as its ultimate guardian, as he is under oath required to defend the constitution.

The position of the Indian President is positively not so nominal and weak as he is pinned down and painted by the present Congress party Government. The following observations may therefore be of immense importance while reassessing the powers and status of the President particularly when the dangers of party autocracy becoming permanent through emergency are more than real in our country.

1) The Constitution is the only limitation on the powers of the President and no law can whittle down his powers.

2) The President's authority is more broad based than that of the Prime Minister.

3) The President's responsibilities are towards both the Houses, while cabinet is responsible only to the lower house.

4) The President has two institutions. Attorney General and Supreme Court to whom he can refer controversial questions and thus falsify the position of Cabinet both before the Parliament and the people of country in case his opinion against the decisions of the cabinet is empowered by any of these institutions.
5) The President can also create constitutional deadlocks by resigning on an issue and standing for re-election on the same issue.

6) The President can and it is suggested that he should act through emergency provisions of the Cabinet independently in case the cabinet acts in a partisan manner and create disorder in the country by its own policies.

In this regard, after the Brass Tacks, an other Brass Tacks started by Zail Singh, the President of India and Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, ostracising each other. Rajiv believed that this was the direct result of his decision to keep the President out of negotiations over Punjab. "I did not want him to be involved in Punjab because I felt that I could not move ahead", recalled Rajiv. Nevertheless, Zail did interfere. According to Rajiv, it was compulsive rather than a deliberate attempt undermine the negotiation. Rajiv holding Zail Singh responsible for creating Punjab problem in the first place, as has been suggested but says that by handling it the way he did as Home Minister he had made it, much more difficult to resolve. It was as Home Minister that Zail Singh had once ordered the release of
Bhindrewale after he had been detained on suspicion of involvement in murder.

Of the Punjab accord Zail Singh says it was a good idea though defective and therefore implementable. "I did not say anything but I believed the Government did not want to implement it," recalled Zail Singh. In his view, the Congress Party of which he had once been a staunch member, had itself undermined the Punjab accord, if the accord itself was the cause of the first major break between Zail Singh and Rajiv, its non-implementation became a stick the President used to beat the man he continued to regard his young protege.

The former President was also upset as being told by Rajiv to rouse Punjab Chief Minister Barnala in his Presidential speech opening in 1987 budget session of the Parliament, the time when Barnala did not have the support of the majority in the Punjab Assembly. Three times I said to Rajiv, "Don't make me praise Barnala" but he insisted. Three months later, Zail Singh had been asked by the Prime Minister to dismiss Barnala and declare President's rule again in Punjab. Zail Singh says, "I could see no reason for dismissing him as he had the majority support in the Punjab Assembly by then. I wrote a note for the file, it must still be there – saying that it is not understandable that you asked
me to praise him when he was in a minority and now he is in majority and you ask me to dismiss him." It is clear from such that differences over Punjab were the cause of their falling out, though not the only one - perhaps those differences led to others.

After the CAG finding with regard to Bofors Gun deal, Opposition demanded resignation from the Prime Minister and later on almost all the seventyfive members of Lok Sabha resigned their seats in protest, though in Rajya Sabha they retained their strength.

"Congress accused Opposition of murdering democracy with this cheap election stunt. One opposition politician defended the mass walk out saying: "Parliament is an arena of public accountability.". If the government decides to violate the norms on the strength of the majority, the Opposition must dissociate itself from this."

A survey of the functioning of our Parliamentary democracy would easily reveal the sad plight of opposition parties in our country. Their record has been far from being satisfactory and the country has been disillusioned by their long dreary and ineffective role in the running of the Parliamentary life of our country.
It is really unfortunate that the opposition parties in our country are only a form of reaction to Congress Party always harping on the shortcoming of that organisation and not functioning on clear cut fundamental and positive political lines and ideologies.

This lack of clarity on the political issues baffles the general electorate which in state of confusion becomes hesitant for a change and therefore cast their vote for the status quo. Voting for a new party and a new programme is taken to be a hazardous experiment which as the thinking goes, the electorate is not prepared to undertake.

The existence of mushroom political parties in our country is very largely explained by the emphasis in our public life on the element of intense personalism. The political ideologies programmes and movements in our country largely emanate from and depend on the tempers, moods, whims and prejudices of nearly half a dozen political figures.

This over emphasis on these big names has reached today to a stage of a ridiculous scandal. Clean and healthy political life immediately demands an effective opposition and this presupposes clear cut and well defined political programmes of the various political parties particularly of the opposition in the country.
The role of the Rajiv's Congress also has unfortunately not being above board in this direction. It has in order to retain power used all sorts of manipulations and unscrupulous methods both in general elections as well as during normal course of life. It has very cleverly taken to Avadi spirit and has thus outwitted all moderate left parties adhering to socialism. By taking a strong attitude towards Pakistan and China it has again outclassed Jan Sangh and by planning nationalisation, pro-labour policies and fraternisation of Soviet Union it has again created division amongst the members of the Communist Party. These deliberate efforts on the part of this organisation calculated to roughshed and weaken the opposition parties inspire and unleash a chain of reaction in the opposition parties which while wreaking vengeance indulge in unhealthy and irresponsible vilification of the Congress and its policies. And here starts the bad blood, the personal rivalries, mudslining and a complete perversion of the political atmosphere of the country.

**Corrupt Electioneering**

The rapidly mounting cost of electioneering has many evil effects. Since only parties can raise these large sums, the candidate or members elected becomes unduly sub-servient to his party and the standards of thinking and conduct are
lowered. The amount necessary to win election cannot be spent legally, so it is spent covertly. This has set going a monstrous competition in breaking the law which all concerned tacitly agree to wink at a most demoralising situation. To improve his chances of success, the candidate also spends his own money and often a good deal of it, then when he gets into the State Assembly or Parliament he is tempted to seize any opportunity that arises to recoup his expenditure and hence comes further corruption.

Public Administration

It is common knowledge that the standards of public administration are today not as high as they were. It is not broad based and it does not have the mental equipment necessary to serve the ends of a welfare state. Its integrity is not above board and it is not free from corruption. A vast proliferation of government services has greatly multiplied the numbers of employees of all categories and Parkinson's law has come into operation.

The stubborn refusal of the Prime Minister to constitute a statutory judicial tribunal or commission to enquire into charges of corruption at the highest level - as demanded often in the Parliament and recently by a former colleague of his - Sri V.P. Singh - has only served to strengthen
suspicions and rumours regarding the integrity of the administration in general. The frequent interference by members of the ruling party in day-to-day administration shows no sign of abating. It is a widely known fact that many officers who are hard working, honest and conscientious but who are not proficient in the arts of genuflexion and adulation, have lost heart because recognition and promotion have not come their way.

**National Integration**

It is rightly stated that though we are free we still remain to be integrated and do not exist even today after several years of independence as a Nation. We are either Hindus, Muslims, Christians or at the best Madrasies, Bengalis, Punjabis, Keralites but necessarily not Indians. Regional and group loyalties based on caste and province dominate not only political but practically every aspect of Nation's life.

Redrawing of the political map of the country on linguistic considerations has done a colossal damage which can be undone now only by a planned programme of national integration. Inter-provincial marriages, common dress of a particular class, inter-provincial tours and three language formula are some of the programmes which must be honestly
implemented to save our country from disintegration and other fissiparous tendencies which are already on the Congress card of programmes, prominently, incidently did not attract any serious attention of Rajiv Gandhi's Government.

Vociferous both inside as well as outside the Parliament particularly in most sensitive areas of the country had eroded the vulnerability of our clean leadership and his team of Ministers.

Honesty and incorruptibility are the first and the foremost qualifications of a Minister. Ministers are not to enter into any such action whereby their private pecuniary interest might even conceivably come into conflict with public duty and they must observe such self, denial in many similar matters. The Ministers are expected to avoid all transactions which can give colour or countenance to the belief that they are doing anything which the rules of obligation forbid. Most of our Ministers do not stand the test of rules of prudence. How far they stand the test of the rules of obligation, it is difficult to say. The Congress must have the courage to get rid of Ministers guilty of misconduct, if it is to maintain its prestige and its claim to serve the public and the ideals of parliamentary democracy.
Thus the record of our Parliamentary life all these years has been like that of a growing child who has toddled, crawled and staggered in its infant period. It had earlier shocks, upsets the crisis for its was tender and the talks and objectives to be accomplished and achieved were huge and tremendously colossal. But once having pinned our faith in the fundamentals of democracy and the consciousness of the dangerous alternatives to it, there is nothing else left with us except our grim resolve to translate the ideals of parliamentary democracy in the hard realities of life despite odds and difficulties.

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The only new initiative the Government took after operation Black Thunder came much later in the year when Rajiv visited Punjab again, his first visit since 1985. He offered Panchayat or village level election, perhaps as compensation for the absence of democratic rule at the state level. Rajiv's offer was seen as an attempt to win popularity for Congress in advance for the forthcoming Parliamentary elections rather than as a serious attempt to recover the confidence and trust of the Sikh community.
(This view was strengthened when he made the holding of Panchayat elections throughout the country a plank of his national election campaign). Though the Panchayat election were promised by mid 1989, they had not taken place by the time Rajiv stepped down at the end of that year.

Later on, Rajiv admitted that it is one of the greatest failure on his five years in office not to have reformed the party and inculcated his own modernist values into his centenarian organisation. "I should have stuck to my guns and gone through with them, but it got very complicated and we backed down, he reflects. It was his 1989 proposal to extend village level democracy through Panchayati Raj, a system of elected village committees, as a way round the failure to hold party elections. "If we could hold elections in the local bodies, then we would automatically clear out not only the Congress but all the politics at all that level and take out the vested interests and have the answerability there", said Rajiv. It seems very doubtful that it would have worked: since the party organisation has a momentum of its own which would hardly be upset by extending the system of elected village councils. The problem of lack of democracy with the party could only be tackled within the party itself. Rajiv might well ask himself what the value was in putting constituency details into a computer database if the party
office bearers are still appointed rather than elected. Rajiv left office still promising that the party elections would take place soon, saying, "I do not think we can do without them."

It was the Congress Party meeting at Maraimalainagar near Madras in April, 1988 that remarked the end of Rajiv's commitment to reforms though he would continue to pay lip service to the commitment until after he left office. The 'youngman in a hurry' with hardly a good word to say about the party had been replaced by the more seasoned Rajiv, veteran of several state electoral defeats, who had nothing ill to say of the party. He reserved his criticism for the opposition proclaiming, "The Congress Party is the only party which can protect India's independence, unity and integrity.. and is the only party of principles." The party dissidents who had troubled him the previous year were no longer in evidence, or else were no longer dissidents. Anyhow, Rajiv felt no need to explain why internal party elections have not taken place. It seemed as if the Congress Party was back to normal after the aberrations of Rajiv's Bombay speech two years earlier. The wheel had turned full circle, and Rajiv finally became his Mother's son as Maraimalainagar leading a party that for all intents and purposes was hiw own electoral vehicle.
Rajiv did not reform the party because he could not, vested interest ran too deep. Possibly he could have done so if he had acted immediately but his repeated failures to win state assembly elections and his poor campaigning performance weakened his power base within the party. What is difficult to believe is that he did not hold party elections simply because he feared the humiliation of not being reselected as party President, as some have argued.

Rajiv once remarked, "The political unity of modern India is itself a reflection of the united political will which the Congress built up." Whether or not Congress's days or the national party of the government are past, Rajiv at least recognised that if it was to survive, if not to retain what it had come to regard as its virtually divine right to rule India - it needed to reform itself and smarten up its own democratic credentials. He saw the only party in that way could it hope to resist the challenge from other and in particular from the new regional parties emerging on the Indian political stage. But it was not enough to recognise this, he needed to carry through those reforms and that is where he manifestly failed.
There are those who regard Rajiv's India as a Golden age; indeed Rajiv is one of them asked by Journalists to sum up his five years as Prime Minister, moments after he had surrendered that post to V.P. Singh, he said, "I think India has never had the sort of developments and progress and international standing that it has gained in these five years. Indeed he had some justification to this boast; economic growth averaged over six per cent, with every prospect that it would sustain that level; tax revenue was a record level allowing ambitious programmes of government expenditures; export were up; though imports were also up leaving a substantial trade deficit; employment level, a particular target of Rajiv's, were also higher than they had ever been as a percentage of population, but of course the population level was upto 800 million. Perhaps the greatest cause of satisfaction for Rajiv's government was the fact that despite severe drought nobody had died from starvations. Thanks to judicious use of food buffer stocks. Not only that, but grain output once more reached record levels during 1989."

The other side of the coin is that most Indian do not have the buying power to benefit from the essential urban boon. For those close to the poverty line, rise in prices especially during Rajiv's fifth year in power, have knocked
out whatever gain had come from subsidies. The rapid rise in the cost of sugar in particular, allegedly because of bureaucratic delays in meeting shortages with imported supplies, was undoubtedly a factor in Rajiv's defeat. While some people have climbed out of poverty trap and became consumers with purchasing power. The vast majority, at least 100 million remain at subsistence level with little to show by way of any improvement in their circumstances after five year's of Rajivs' liberalised socialism. Increased expenditure on health, education and anti-poverty programmes takes longer than five years to bring significant advances. Despite the slogans -eliminate poverty, eliminate unemployment, education for all - there had been no sustained attack on poverty and few examples on technology benefitting the ordinary people.

In case of Assam, it would be wrong to say that Assam accord did not work. It brought an end to the students' agitation and cleared the way for elections to be held in December, 1985. These were won by the newly formed Assam Gana Parishad (ASP), the former student agitators who were an unusually young and well educated government. The sixtyfour assembly members of the ruling party had an average age of around 30, with only twelve of them married, and all but four were college graduates. More significantly for Rajiv, AGPs victory made Assam the fifth Indian state to be ruled by a
regional party rather than a national party and the eighth to be lost to Congress; a worrying trend for the party which was less inclined to see the result magnanimously the 'victory for democracy' then it had been after its defeat in Punjab.

However, the expulsion for which Assam accord provided never took place. Perhaps Rajiv never intended that they would. In any case, it has never been clear to where those affected would be expelled - whether to Bangla Desh or to any other Indian state; no other state had been asked to accept them, was this an other example of unimplementable accord, or on which was never intended to be implemented. In 1989 Lok Sabha polling in Assam was once more postponed because it was said, the voters lists were not ready. The postponement gave rise to new fears, but the agitation might restart. (It had been the publication of voter's lists for the 1979 Lok Sabha elections and the realisation by Assamese that they contained the names of many so called foreigners that had provoked the unrest and violence in the first place, clearly one of the main objectives of the original movement, the expulsion of non-Assamese immigrants, had not been achieved, in this respect the accord had not been carried out. Rajiv's government also sensed quickly to have dropped the idea
of building a barbed wire fence around Bangladesh to prevent further immigration."

In context of Bodoland agitation which was condemned by AGP government as sponsored by Rajiv's Congress - was an other thorn. Perhaps, the Bodos may have also been inspired in past by the Gorkhaland movement which had campaigned successfully for more autonomy for Nepali speaking peoples of Northern West Bengal region around Darjeeling. Here, too the communist state government suspected that central govt. had colluded in the violent agitation as a destabilisation tactic. The Gorkha agitators had been pessified with the setting up of an autonomous hill council under an accord signed in August, 1988, though a splinter group continued to fight for a greater degree of independence from West Bengal. Similar movements for separate statehood, like the long standing one by the Jharkhand community who straddle the borders of Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa and Madhya Pradesh seemed even about to erupt into violence at the slightest provocation encouraged by the success of agitation elsewhere.

Certainly the efforts in tackling the regional problems, Rajiv had shown an inclination to sign accords which conceded some of the agitators demands. Though his own ground rules had precluded negotiating with terrorists, every movement
and many of the individuals to whom he talked had used or advocated violent means towards achieving their objectives. Just as meeting ransom demands, risks encouraging kidnapping or hijacking, Rajiv's tendency to concede demands through accords encouraged other to demonstrate their value with the hope that they too would be 'bought off' with concessions. None of the accords can be considered totally stable and the terms of all were based more on hope than on realism when it came to putting them into effect. Rule by accord was turning out to be a dangerous means of quelling unrest, even before Rajiv tackled his biggest accord of all involving a negotiating partner beyond India's shores.

The Eighth Lok Sabha will be remembered in India's Parliamentary history for many other activities. For instance, it discussed at length the Thakkar Commission report on the assassination of the late Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi. The discussions were marked by uproarious scenes and procedural wrangles which also saw the suspension of 63 members of the Opposition on a single day - 15 March, 1989 - for the remaining days of the week.

The same was the case with discussions on matters relating to the purchase of the 155 mm Howitzer guns from the Bofors Company of Sweden. The House which set up a Joint
Parliamentary Committee on the deal discussed extensively the Committee's report. The debate on the bofors issue took up a sizeable time - 64 hours 16 minutes - in several sessions of the Lok Sabha.

Closely linked to the Bofors debate was the debate on the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on the purchase of these guns from Sweden. Once again acrimonious scenes and procedural wrangles consumed considerable time of the House. A record of sorts was created when the House was adjourned eight times on a single day - 20 July, 1989. These developments ultimately culminated in en masse resignations by Opposition members from the Lok Sabha.

There were many uproarious scenes also during discussions on the Ranganath Misra Commission report into allegations of organised violence in Delhi after the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi; the relations between the President and the Prime Minister; the Fairfax issue; the HDW submarine deal; the communal situation in the country; terrorism in Punjab; imposition of President's rule in States; and the situation in Sri Lanka.

Among other subjects that came up before the House were: the accords on Assam, Punjab and Tripura and the Gorkhaland
agitation; the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, India's External Relations particularly India's relations with the Super Powers as also its neighbours; the situation in Fiji and Maldives; and racial discrimination in South Africa. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights of Divorce) Bill, 1986 generated lively discussions in the wake of the Shahbano case and the Bill was passed at a marathon sitting on 5–6 May, 1986 at 2.45 A.M. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Bill, 1987 saw members raising their voice against the evil practice of Sati.

The Defamation Bill, 1988 was a subject of intense debate in the House. It led to an unenviable situation. It is very rare for the Press to boycott the proceedings of Parliament. However, on 5 September, 1988 all the correspondents covering Parliament, except the official media, absented themselves to join the Journalists' rally against the Defamation Bill.

On 6 August, 1985 on the 40th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the speaker referred to the tragic incident and the House paid homage to the victims. Subsequent years also saw the House paying homage to the victims of the atomic bomb.

India's commitment to the United Nations was once again reiterated by the Lok Sabha when on 29 August, 1985, the House
adopted a resolution to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the United Nations.

On 19th August, 1985, the Lok Sabha adopted a resolution condemning apartheid at the end of a Short Duration Discussion on the "racial riots in South Africa affecting the people of Indian origin". Again, on 18 November, 1985 the House through a resolution on the situation in South Africa, called upon the world community to ensure that the Pretoria regime spared the life of freedom fighter, Benjamin Moloise.

The Lok Sabha, time and again, discussed the need to promote the cause of disarmament and extended wholehearted support to the Six-National Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament.

When natural calamities played havoc in Columbia and the Soviet Republic of Armenia, the members were unanimous in mourning the loss of lives in those two countries.

The situation in Nicaragua and the US action in bombing Tripoli and Benghazi in Libya also were discussed by the House.

India reiterated its principled commitment to safeguarding human rights and thus to the core of democratic values and Parliamentary forms, the Nations cherished goals.