

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER,
DR. MANMOHAN SINGH**

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Respected Vice-President of India; Respected Speaker of the Lok Sabha; My Esteemed Friend Prof. Amartya Sen; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are all truly privileged that we have gathered here today to pay tribute to the memory of one of our most distinguished Parliamentarians, Prof. Hirendra Nath Mukerjee. He was a great Parliamentarian; a distinguished scholar; and a rare Communist; was also a true liberal.

He combined in himself all the liberal instincts of a renaissance man and the passionate fervour of a Communist revolutionary. It is not often that one comes across a liberal revolutionary. Some might regard that description an oxymoron: can a revolutionary be a liberal? But that is precisely what Prof. Hiren Mukerjee was.

One of the hallmarks of Bengali renaissance was this commitment to liberalism and pluralism. We see it in the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, in the Essays of Raja Rammohan Roy and in the novels and poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. It is from that milieu that social reformism shaped by liberalism and a commitment of scientific temper that Hiren Mukerjee hailed. Before he became a political activist, he distinguished himself as a legal luminary and a great scholar.

I am, therefore, delighted that a Lecture in his memory is being delivered by another great son of Bengal and of India and a product of Bengali renaissance, my friend, Prof. Amartya Sen. We are also privileged that this Lecture is being delivered in the presence of a true inheritor of the legacy of Hiren Mukerjee, our Distinguished Speaker, Shri Somnath Chatterjee.


This evening, therefore, is a remarkable one and, indeed, a unique one. Hiren Mukerjee was known to have observed once:

“Politics, fundamentally speaking, calls for passion in its pursuit. A passion, in Latin, has for its first meaning ‘suffering’ which none in true political life should wish to escape.”

The suffering in politics that Hiren Mukerjee drew his inspiration from was a derivative of the commitment to end all suffering. Those of us who are in public life find meaning in it only because we view public office as a means of alleviating the suffering of our people and contributing to their well being and happiness.

I am, therefore, particularly delighted that today's Lecture in memory of Prof. Hiren Mukerjee is being delivered by Prof. Amartya Sen. Prof. Sen has dedicated his professional life to seeking an answer, like the great Buddha himself, to human suffering. It is this combination of deep and abiding commitment to the welfare and well being of our people and, at the same time, to the fundamental principles of liberal democracy that elevate Prof. Sen's work.

It is at a time when extreme dogmatism and fundamentalism are seeking to weaken the fabric and framework of liberalism that we value most the intellectual contribution of scholars like Prof. Amartya Sen. Over the years, I have come to value and admire this aspect of Prof. Sen's work. The policies and principles of our Government, as indeed the intellectual inspiration for the National Common Minimum Programme, are drawn from the world view that Amartya Sen has come to represent so eloquently. This world view is captured by what we call as inclusive growth.

Amartya has been a passionate advocate of inclusive growth through most of his professional life. What we are trying to do in Government is to give a concrete shape to those ideas of what I would call growth with a human face or growth with social justice. These ideas and ideals had inspired our national movement, and they continue to inspire those of us who occupy the centre space in Indian politics and walk the middle path on social, political and economic issues. 

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that the subject of today's lecture as well as the choice of the person delivering that lecture would have been heartily approved by the Late Prof. Hiren Mukherjee. He was both a respected Communist and an admired parliamentarian. I sincerely hope the new generation of our

parliamentarians will study the life and contribution of leaders like Prof. Hiren Mukherjee and derive inspiration from it.

Here was a man whose politics was shaped by his commitment to overthrow what he regarded as bourgeois democracy; and yet who came to represent the finest traditions of our parliamentary democracy. It is leaders like him that have given hope to millions of our countrymen and strengthened the foundations of our democracy. Today, India stands as a shining example of a poor country seeking its economic and social salvation within the framework of a liberal and secular democracy.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the inspirational leadership of our distinguished Speaker Shri Somnath Chatterjee. The entire country has come to look up to him for balance and fair play in the functioning of our Lok Sabha. He is, as I have said, a true inheritor of the legacy of Comrade Hiren Mukherjee. I thank Shri Somnath Chatterjee for having honoured us all by inviting Prof. Amartya Sen to address us in this historic Central Hall of our Parliament on a theme of great contemporary relevance.

I thank you.

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