

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE VICE-PRESIDENT,
SHRI MOHAMMAD HAMID ANSARI**

HON. VICE-PRESIDENT : Hon. Prime Minister; Hon. Speaker, Lok Sabha; Prof. Amartya Sen; Hon. Ministers; Hon. Members of Parliament; Excellencies; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen:

This audience and a larger number beyond this august hall cannot but thank the hon. Speaker of Lok Sabha for taking this commendable initiative in instituting the Hiren Mukherjee Lecture.

Hiren Mukherjee was an iconic figure. A man learned in texts ancient and modern, he was amongst the best of his generation. Politics to him was anchored in values and principles. It was an open and uncomplicated pursuit. He delved in it with all the passion that he could summon for articulating public grievances.

He loved India and the values it stood for. "In my mind", he said in Lok Sabha in 1956, "there coexists a kind of a fanatical love for the culture of our country and an equally ferocious hatred for those elements in our national life which have vulgarised and degraded that inheritance".

(d/1820/spr-skb)

Hiren Mukherjee was an accomplished parliamentarian who enjoyed battling with foemen worthy of their steel, felt the Question Hour was reflective of the power and value of the legislative rapier and took a thoughtful pride in the functioning of Parliament in its early days. He also watched with misgiving the emergence of a category to which in his words 'the decencies of discourse are irrelevant'. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that his memory be honoured.

Equally appropriate is the choice of the person to deliver this first lecture. The celebrated author of *The Argumentative Indian* has spent a lifetime on problems of development and inequality, and does believe, as he himself puts it, that 'silence is a powerful enemy of social justice'. Social justice, in fact, is the theme of Prof. Sen's lecture. And I make haste to cease being an obstacle between the audience and the distinguished speaker. (ends)