

“At the outset, I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to Smt. Sudha Murty, recipient of the 21st Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence in Philanthropic work.

While describing the qualities and virtues of the great son of India and former Prime Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, I would like to paraphrase a beautiful and moving poem of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in which the sun is setting and everyone is worried as to what will happen when darkness falls... then the little earthen lamp speaks up... “Light me, as long as I last, I’ll do the best I can”.

I have drawn this analogy to highlight what Shastriji did in his short span of life as Prime Minister of India. Shastriji rose from a humble beginning to that pre-eminent position and yet always maintained simplicity, humility and humanitarian outlook. He displayed a statesman-like dignity, impeccable integrity and served the nation without ever compromising on high moral values.

An important aspect of Shastriji’s persona was his remarkable ability to communicate effectively and negotiate skillfully. It was but natural for Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru to depend on Shastriji and the first Prime Minister used to duly entrust him with difficult and delicate negotiations. One of the secrets of his extraordinary success as a negotiator was his ability to see the other man’s point of view. He was always ready to make maximum allowance for another person’s feelings.

During his tenure as Minister without portfolio and Home Minister, he had handled extraordinary situations with great aplomb. I will just cite two incidents in which he had handled the explosive situation in a masterly manner with tact and patience-- one pertains to the language problem in Assam in 1961 and the other relates to the Hazratbal Sacred Relic in 1964.

Although soft-spoken, Shastriji had a steely resolve which was evident in the firm manner in which he effectively tackled the aggression of Pakistan during the 1965 war. His abiding concern for the uplift of the downtrodden sections, women, farmers and the jawans is quite well-known. His famous salutation in honour of farmers and jawans—‘Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan’ has been reverberating across the nation ever since it was coined. Another visionary statesman, the former Prime Minister, Shri A B Vajpayee added “Jai Vigyan” to underline the importance of science in improving the quality of life.

His qualities of simplicity, integrity, humility, patience, tolerance and his ability to resolve challenging problems will always remain an inspiration to every Indian.

Shastriji firmly believed in peace, but proved to be combative when the situation warranted. Speaking on the occasion of Independence Day on August 15, 1965, Shastriji said that force would be met with force. Although Indian troops reached up to Lahore, he agreed to sign the Tashkent Declaration, keeping in view the need for maintaining peace in the sub-continent.

The visionary statement he had made in his broadcast to the nation at that time is as relevant now as when it was made. He had said : “While the conflict between the armed forces of the two countries has come to an end, the more important thing for the United Nations and all those who stand for peace is to bring to an end the deeper conflict ... How can this be brought about? In our view, the only answer lies in peaceful coexistence. India has stood for the principle of coexistence and championed it all over the world. Peaceful coexistence is possible among nations no matter how deep the differences between them, how far apart they

are in their political and economic systems, no matter how intense the issues that divide them”.

With the economies of India and rest of the world trying to recover from the massive disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic, the need for all nations, particularly those in South Asia, is to come together to promote peace, eradicate poverty, improve socio-economic conditions of the masses and wipe out the menace of terrorism.

No country is safe from the scourge of terrorism and it is high time for the United Nations to complete the deliberations on India’s long-pending proposal—Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and adopt it. The world community must come together to not only isolate nations that sponsor terrorism but also impose sanctions against them. The days of platitudes are over and it is time for concrete action.

There is also a need to reform the UN and create a more inclusive and equitable world order.

Dear sisters and brothers,

Over the years, India has traveled a long way and made a remarkable progress in various sectors, including agriculture. Thanks to the push given by Shastri ji to the Green Revolution and White Revolution, our farmers are in a position to ensure food security and India has become the largest producer of milk.

In spite of the restrictions during the lockdown, our farmers acted as frontline warriors and rose to the occasion to produce enough food grains. Unmindful of the risk to their lives, doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, security forces, sanitation workers and media personnel too have been working with dedication in these testing times. My compliments to all of them!

With the COVID-19 pandemic triggering an unprecedented health crisis and adversely impacting the economy and livelihoods, the Centre and various state governments have initiated a series of measures to ramp up health infrastructure and mitigate the hardship caused to the people, particularly poor and the working class.

Dear sisters and brothers,

This is the time for all Indians to supplement the efforts of the governments, NGOs and others in extending a helping hand to those adversely hit by the pandemic. The concepts of ‘Sarvejanasukhainobhavantu’ and ‘share and care’ have underpinned Indian philosophy since ancient times and we should always remain committed to the larger humanitarian cause.

As a matter of fact-of-fact, the Bhagavadgita speaks of the importance of charity. The concept of “Daana” is ingrained in the Indian way of life and the ancient scriptures also mention about daana. From kings to well-to-do landlords to individuals, communities to companies, there have been benevolent acts of charity, donations and taking up projects for public good.

Well-known Indian industrial houses have formed trusts and foundations to provide education, healthcare and taken up projects to help the downtrodden sections through CSR activities.

Dear sisters and brothers,

I must say that everyone associated with Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management are fortunate as you are part of an extraordinary legacy admired throughout the world. Men and women who imbibe qualities of Shastrian leadership and integrity can make a difference to organizations and communities.

I, therefore, urge the faculty and students of Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management to take up research on social and economic problems on a regular basis. Let us all strive together in eliminating corruption, poverty, inequality, social and gender discrimination and build a New India.

I am glad that the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence, instituted by LBSIM upholds the vision of Shastri Ji and honours people with outstanding accomplishments in various fields. These awards are not only meant to acknowledge the excellent work done by various people but are also aimed at inspiring and motivating others to take up philanthropic work.

I am happy that this year the award has been given to Smt. SudhaMurty well-known philanthropist and a prolific writer. My congratulations to her once again for the award and to Infosys Foundation for the immense support extended to underprivileged sections through various projects in healthcare, education, public hygiene and rural development, among others.

Smt. SudhaMurty richly deserves all the accolades, honours and awards that came her way as she is the moving force behind the Infosys Foundation. She inspires people by her exemplary service. I once again wish to express my appreciation for her remarkable simplicity and attitude of seva and paropakara.

Jai Hind!”