

value of individual freedom. If a single individual, organisation, or country can set in motion the right kind of idea, it may ultimately move the whole world.

He said in another place:

Let us consider for a moment man, not as an individual, but Man in the sum, Man with a capital M. The earth which he inhabits is a small planet revolving round an insignificant star (for that is what the Sun is)—so insignificant that if by any cosmic cataclysm it were to disappear, the event would not even be noticed from the remoter parts of our own galaxy, let alone the innumerable other galaxies in the Universe. On this planet, which is many millions of years old, Man is a very recent arrival, compared with other forms of life. His normal expectation of life is about 70 years. Thus on the purely physical plane, he is a mere speck in space and time. Most of his life is a struggle for existence, leaving little time for higher thought. And yet look at his achievements in the few thousands of years since civilisation began. ‘Perched precariously on this rotating speck of mud and water’ that we call the earth, Man, in the brief intervals of struggling to live, has by mere force of thought penetrated into the deepest mysteries of the Universe; has discovered the laws of the infinitely vast spaces around us as well as of the infinitely small world within the atom, and is now in the process of creating a miniature Sun that we call the hydrogen bomb. When we contemplate these truly wonderful conquests of external Nature, have we no reason for hoping that he will—before very long—discover the laws of his own well-being and learn to conquer himself rather than destroy himself? Surely, the end of all his labours could not merely be the destruction of the race.

17. ELECTION TO THE WORLD COURT (1951)

Rau was elected judge of the International Court of Justice in 1951-52 by the United Nations General Assembly. Justice Frankfurter wrote to him: “You are one of the people I have ever encountered who had a deep instinctive sense of

justice. I begrudged the years you gave, I am sure conscientiously, to diplomacy and rejoiced when you took your rightful place on the Court.

18. DEATH AND TRIBUTES IN PARLIAMENT AND ELSEWHERE (1953)

B.N. Rau died in the early hours of 30th November, 1953, at Zurich. On the very same day Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, departing from the usual convention, made a reference in the Lok Sabha to the services rendered by B.N. Rau to the country. The following is the extract from the proceedings of the Lok Sabha of that day :²⁵

“2.30 P.M.

DEATH OF SHRI B.N. RAU

The Prime Minister and Leader of the House (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru) : Sir, I beg your leave to refer to a sad event that took place in the early hours of this morning in the city of Zurich, Switzerland. It is customary in this House for reference to be made when a Member of this House or of the past Assemblies dies. It is not customary for such reference to be made in the case of a non-Member. I venture to make this mention here in regard to a person who was not a Member of this House, but who was nonetheless connected very intimately, if I may say so, with this House, and more especially the Constitution under which this House is functioning. I refer to Shri Benegal Narasing Rau who died at about half past two this morning at Zurich. Shri B.N. Rau was, as the House knows, eminent in many fields and he served the country in various ways. I remember—it is memory of long ago—seeing him as a contemporary at Cambridge in my own college, an exceedingly shy person who almost refused to talk to one because he was so shy. Since then he accumulated a great deal of learning and experience and scholarship. But he bore that great weight of scholarship always in an unassuming, unobtrusive way. I doubt if anybody saw him

25. Lok Sabha Proceedings, 30 November, 1953.