

## 7. Unity of Minds

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

My dear citizens of India,

On the eve of the fifty-fifth anniversary of our Independence, I have great pleasure in offering you my best wishes for your well-being and happiness. My salutations to all of you both in India and abroad. ①

May I extend a special word of gratitude to the men of our defence who guard our frontiers on the land, on the sea and in the air. I also thank the paramilitary forces. May I also convey my special appreciation to our farmers who toil in the fields and technicians who keep the wheels of our industry moving. I appreciate the contribution of teachers, doctors, engineers, scientists, technologists and other professionals and administrators who are the prime movers of national development. May I wish the youth of India whose purposeful hard work will be a major transforming force for a prosperous India. ②

I met a few freedom fighters, some days ago, at the Rastrapathi Bhavan. Each and every one of them was the live force of our freedom movement. On this day, I salute all men and women of India who fought for our freedom and sacrificed their lives to achieve our Independence. The great vision of a free India was born around 1857. For 90 years, there was an intensive struggle for freedom. Many of our people and leaders went to jail; their suffering was the fuelling force for the freedom movement. This transformation occurred under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. I have tried to capture the essence of the freedom movement. And, two aspects emerge: our independence is a result of their supreme sacrifice; and, the vision-driven movement created many leaders in different spheres of politics, economics, industry, science, arts and culture. ③



After Independence, India has made giant strides in agriculture and food production, energy, healthcare, education, science and technology. Particularly we have made our mark in the international arena in the fields of pharmaceuticals, information technology, mass media and communication, space, defence and nuclear science. ①

The first vision created a movement to achieve freedom. A similar unity of minds and purposes is necessary to integrate people from all walks of life towards a common purpose. This second vision will transform our country from the present developing status into a fully developed nation. It implies integrated actions in the areas of agriculture and food processing, education and healthcare, infrastructure development which includes the development of power, information and communication technologies, and critical technologies. This greater vision will aim at alleviating poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. When the minds of the people of our country are unified and focused towards this vision, the dormant potential will manifest itself as a mammoth power. A happy and prosperous life of a billion people is the chief goal of this vision; it will also remove the conflicts arising out of difference and petty thinking. ②

Dear citizens, I would like to reiterate that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. It is not an international issue. India will be ready for a bilateral dialogue once cross-border terrorism is brought to a complete end. Normal election process is on in Jammu and Kashmir. It is essential to ensure its successful completion for the dawn of peace in Jammu and Kashmir. ③

We have many challenges in front of us. We have to find a solution to the recurring droughts and floods; we have to eradicate communal and other divisive forces sprouting in certain parts of our country. We must alleviate the pain of our people whether it is in Jammu and Kashmir or any other part of our country; we also have to find a permanent solution to combat terrorism. ④

Let us now look at a long-term problem. It is paradoxical to see floods in one part of our country while some other parts face drought. The need of the hour is a water mission. It should

make water available to fields, villages, towns and industries throughout the year, while protecting ecological balance. One major job of the water mission would be the networking of our rivers. Technological and project management capabilities of our country can rise to the occasion and make this river networking a reality. We can desalinate the vast seas around us for potable water. There are, of course, short-term techniques such as water harvesting and water recycling. Such programmes should have a large-scale people participation even at the conceptual and project planning stages. The entire programme should lead to larger employment potential, environmental sustainability, and benefit sharing; the programmes should contribute to the prosperity of people. ⑤

I would, now, like to share with you friends, another crucial requirement for the development of our country. We cannot sustain a second vision for the country without the Unity of Minds of all our people. Our great strength is our pluralistic tradition and heritage of nearly 3000 years. I have always been asking myself, what is the strength of our heritage? Indian life is the result of a unique fusion of multiple cultures, religions and the ways of life of many parts of the world. One can trace from the beginning of our history, and especially from 1857 to date, the type of good experiences we have had and also the strife resulting out of the differences in our thoughts. ⑥

I have just returned from Gujarat where I visited the Sabarmati Ashram, which was established by Mahatma Gandhi for the purpose of our countrymen to carry on the search for the truth and develop fearlessness. I sat in silence for a while in the Ashram and remembered the life of Gandhiji. One dominant thought came to my mind. If we can rise above our own personal hardships and decide to work for a larger cause, then there will be a natural elevation of our minds. I felt confident that our minds could be elevated to the level of noble minds, if we try to understand others and practice tolerance. I realized that Gujarat has given us the noble leader – Mahatma Gandhi, unifier of the nation – Vallabhbhai Patel and the great visionary in science



and technology – Vikram Sarabhai and many more. The time has come for every one of us to put the thoughts of such great people into action for our nation's welfare. 10

Non-violence, tolerance, acceptance of all religions and different ways of life, search for truth and fearlessness are the values the Mahatma taught us and they are the cornerstones of our civilization and heritage and, hence, of Indian polity. Any act by anyone anywhere in India that runs counter to these eternal values would pose a threat to the fabric of free India. We should all work together to achieve the mission of the Unity of Minds to preserve the invaluable freedom that our noble leaders earned for us and to reach greater heights in the future. 11

When I interact with children and youth, they ask me, 'who are our role models?' By example, parents and teachers have to show them how to live as enlightened citizens. Children look for role models in different fields at the national level. I have described the role models from Gujarat. Each state contributed many such examples in the past. It is time we created more role models. I suggest that members of our Parliament and Legislatures shape the future of our children by becoming good role models. They have a crucial role in realizing the vision of a developed India. Our children should see the members of Parliament debating the vision of a developed India, providing action plans and putting forth great thoughts. Looking at the national leaders, the children will find their role models for their development and growth. 12

I am sure, our leadership and our people can achieve the second vision of a developed India. Let us take a vow on this Independence Day that the nation is more important compared to any individual, party or organization. 13

I pray to the Almighty for the Unity of Minds and our success in every aspect of life. 14

Jai Hind.

*Adapted from His Excellency, the President of India,  
Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam's address to the nation on the eve of  
Independence Day, 2002*