

My fellow countrymen; Today I want to convey my greetings on Independence Day to everyone from Kanya Kumari to Karakoram and from Kutch to Arunachal Pradesh and also to all Indians living in different parts of the world. India attained Independence 42 years ago and Panditji hoisted the Tri-colour for the first time in Free India.

Today, while hoisting the flag, I feel that I am not alone but with me in unfurling the flag are, the hands of 80 crore people of India. Ours is a historic flag. Under this Tri-colour we have fought for our freedom, we have made the country strong and taken it forward. Flag hoisting on Independence Day symbolises freedom of India and freedom of every Indian. Today, on the occasion of Independence Day, our thoughts go back to lakhs of freedom-fighters, many of whom we do not know, and their names are buried in history. Sacrifices of thousands of them are not recorded in history. To those freedom fighters who are with us today, we express our gratitude. We are reminded of our freedom fighters whenever we think of independent India. They faced numerous challenges to liberate the country, to strengthen it and take her forward. They made great sacrifices and waged a relentless struggle. But, today our thoughts turn specially to Gandhiji, Shastriji and Indiraji. Gandhiji charted a new course for our struggle for freedom, Panditji gave a new direction and led the nation on the path of progress. Shastriji and Indiraji faced formidable odds in strengthening and protecting the unity and integrity of India.

Today, we must also keep in mind that the freedom struggle of India was a unique revolutionary movement. There have been only two or three such movements earlier in history. One was that of America, the other that of France and yet another was that of Russia. Then came the revolutionary movement of India. But while the earlier three movements were marked by waves of violence, India under the leadership of Gandhiji adopted a new course. During the dark days of servitude, Gandhiji showed us a path derived from the heritage of our country. This brought us back to the course of our history and culture. India grew strong by that principled approach. On the strength of those very principles we could win Independence, grow

strong and preserve our freedom. But what were the principles propounded by Gandhiji? They were not new; he only rediscovered them from our history and culture for us. Foremost amongst them was Ahimsa (non-violence). But when Gandhiji talked of Ahimsa, he had a much larger perspective in mind. By Ahimsa he did not mean merely the absence of violence; what he meant was that we should not even have a feeling of violence in our hearts which has to be suppressed. He led us on the path of truth, non-violence, tolerance and compassion. He taught us that the history and heritage of India clearly reflected that humanity was one, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, religion, language and region. With these ideals, Gandhiji made us strong. These very ideals which gave us strength, also gave us freedom and enabled us to sustain it.

Gandhiji taught us that if India has to develop, if the people of India were to be really free, then this freedom and development have to start from the village level. Only then can we really claim that we are free. Gandhiji strove hard but certain capitalist forces did not let him succeed. His hands were tied and development at that time could not start from the village level.

The entire country had great affection for Gandhiji. It is difficult to describe in words the deep and strong bonds that existed between Gandhiji and the people of the country; yet there were a few amongst us who killed Gandhiji. Gandhiji was assassinated by the communal forces. We must understand and be clear in our minds that communal forces did not kill Gandhiji only to eliminate him but to disintegrate the newly independent country before it got its moorings. However, these designs could not succeed because Gandhiji had given such strength to India that it would never fall or break.

After the assassination of Gandhiji, Panditji led India on the road to development and nation-building. He led India to carve out a place for her in the world. From the ramparts of this Red Fort, Panditji on numerous occasions reminded us about the tryst that the Congress had made with destiny and now after 42 years of Independence we have got an

opportunity to redeem that pledge. Had Panditji been in our midst today he would have seen how India has built herself up on the foundation that he laid. I am confident that today's India would have filled Panditji's heart with pride. This is the year of Panditji's Birth Centenary. If he had an opportunity to have a look at our progress during the last 42 years, a look at our farmers, our agricultural labourers, our workers, our women, our children, our scientists, our youth, our Armed Forces, our industries and our all round progress, I am sure he would have felt extremely delighted and proud. But he would have noticed a few drawbacks too. He would have discovered that despite immense progress and development a few deficiencies still persist and our tasks remained incomplete. Panditji had reminded us from this very Red Fort of the words of Gandhiji that so long as we do not wipe out the tears from the eyes of every Indian, we cannot rest. Even today, we have not been able to wipe out the tears from every eye and therefore there is no time to relax. We have a stupendous task and a long struggle ahead which calls for great sacrifices.

Panditji very much wanted to fulfil Gandhiji's dream of Gramowaraj. To achieve this, he started Panchayati Raj. But he could not complete the task. He could not accomplish this mission because of the infiltration of power-brokers who did not allow it to succeed. They ensured that real power did not slip out of their hands into the hands of the people of Bharat. After introducing Panchayati Raj, Panditji did not live long to fight the power-brokers to ensure that the power that Gandhiji had wrested from the British reached the people.

Indira Gandhi dedicated her entire life to the poor people and the weaker sections of India. She made every effort for the upliftment of the downtrodden. She started with bank nationalisation so that the people of India could have access to capital. Today we are not facing those problems. We must remember that 20 years ago when the banks were nationalised, there was almost no branch of any bank in rural India and the poor people were neither getting any help nor did they derive any benefit from the capital in the banks.

Even in Independent India, wealth was only getting circulated among the affluent people. Indiraji changed the scene by nationalising the banks. She invested the funds to alleviate poverty and also for the welfare and upliftment of the poor.

For the first time, the 20-Point Programme of Indiraji succeeded in reducing poverty in India. For the first time, we saw that the benefit of big projects and programmes, started reaching the poor and weaker sections. Indiraji devoted her entire life for fighting and eliminating the capitalist forces. If there was anything dearer to Indiraji than poverty-alleviation, it was the freedom of India and her unity and integrity. Indiraji spared no effort to ensure that India became stronger. She did not take any step which would have in any way encouraged any element which would weaken the country. But Indiraji also had to lay down her life because of fissiparous forces. It was yet another attempt to disintegrate India just as by killing Gandhiji an attempt was made to break India.

I still remember the critical phase through which India passed when Indiraji was assassinated about five years ago. Dark clouds were hovering all over the country. There were agitations in different parts threatening to break the country. After the assassination of Gandhiji, perhaps this was for the first time that India was facing such a crisis. An agitation was continuing in Punjab to disintegrate the country. In Tripura, Mizoram and Assam and in the hills of Darjeeling also certain developments were taking place. In the South, because of the developments in Sri Lanka some weaknesses were becoming apparent in our country. Anybody who observed the situation at that time could not have believed that the country would come out of the crisis. All that is now, a thing of the past. At that time, in November, the only aim bring the country back to the path shown by Gandhiji, Panditji and Indiraji, to realise their dreams and the dreams of the people of India.

The killers of Indiraji wanted to break India. This conspiracy was not hatched in our country, but was conceived abroad and thrust upon us. This conspiracy aimed at breaking and destroying our country. The assassination of Indiraji was the first step in this direction. The traitors took

Indiraji away from the people of India. Those traitors snatched away my mother from me. I took a vow that I would not let them succeed in their aims. let them succeed in their aims. We would not allow anyone to dismember the country whatever be the price, whatever be the sacrifice we may have to make. My mother Indiraji had taught me that no sacrifice is too great for the country. Whatever be the difficulties and whatever be the sacrifices, we are prepared to make them and are prepared to lay down our lives. We have to carry forward the struggle started by Gandhiji, Panditji and Indiraji. We have to carry forward the same movement because Gandhiji's movement was not only to liberate India. It aimed at ushering in a new era for the people of the world. Gandhiji showed that it was the only way to save the world civilisation. Today there is a growing realization in the world that humanity can be saved only through the path shown to us by Gandhiji and Panditji who for the first time gave new ideologies to the world. For the first time, they impressed upon the super powers that the world cannot move forward and humanity cannot be saved by power-blocks. They asserted that a new world-vision is required. This vision is of Ahimsa, Truth, Compassion and Tolerance and above all this is a vision to view humanity as one entity. This was our strength and that is how India has emerged as a strong nation. But in pursuit of this ideal we have had to encounter various forces and face many challenges. At times, we have faced reactionary forces and even today, this confrontation is going on as the reactionary forces have not been finished.

We know how the die-hard elements are active even today in encroaching upon the rights of women. We can see for ourselves how these conservative forces, instead of co-operating in the developmental process of the country, in the service of the people and making the country strong, and protecting its unity and integrity, are busy in singing and dancing. India cannot be built in this fashion, and we cannot make it strong in this manner. Similarly, the forces are still active in weakening and breaking the country. This is a matter of deep regret. I said earlier that if Gandhiji, Panditji and Indiraji were alive today they would have been proud of the progress India had made but some of our deficiencies would have

tormented them. Had they seen that the traitors are moving about freely and are able to be in our Parliament, had they seen that the traitors could support the murderers of Indira Gandhi and accept saropas at the citadels of these murderers, they would have been pained. It would have distressed them to see how some people amongst us are supporting the resolution which aimed at weakening and dismembering the country. Gandhiji, Panditji and Indiraji would have felt distressed to see how the communal forces are becoming active and how politics is being dominated by communalism. Perhaps it would have pained them most to see that some people have deviated from the path shown to us by Gandhiji and are conducting their politics in a different manner. There are people in our political life who can say goodbye to principles. This is very sad because when India gave up, her principled path, we moved towards slavery and ultimately became slaves. We will be facing the same consequences. We became strong only because we adhered to principles. But today unfortunately, opportunism and appeasement are rampant in Indian politics.

Very few people are willing to talk about principles. We must remember that when anti-national, secessionist and communal forces joined hands in an unprincipled manner, India was divided. We must remember how this happened. Today, all our energies must be geared up to defeat the designs of communal, divisive, anti-national, feudal and conservative forces because if they join together, it would mean the division of India. The people of India must remember that if they allow these forces to unite and grow strong, India will disintegrate, her freedom will be lost and India would again become a slave. Such opportunism would nullify the struggle which was carried on for years, nay centuries. We will ensure that these forces do not join together and we will fight to eliminate them. Our fight would not cease till these forces are banished from India and are destroyed completely. Whatever may be the challenge, howsoever arduous be the struggle and whatever may be the sacrifice; no sacrifice can be too great to protect India from such elements.

A review of the progress achieved during the last four-five years would show that India has made significant strides. Even from the point of view of unity and integrity of the country, the darkness that enveloped the nation during October-November, 1984 has been dispelled. Today, we see the bright light of development and India is marching ahead with speed.

In the intervening period, we had to face severe drought but despite that the momentum of agriculture in India was sustained and the farmers of India faced the drought with courage and determination. The workers also laboured hard to give impetus to industrial development. But the new emphasis that we laid on the 20-Point Programme of Indiraji, and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana that we have launched in the Birth Centenary Year of Panditji, has also made an impact in removing the poverty and improving the lot of poor people and weaker sections of India.

Today, I wish to express my gratitude to the people of India. But for their hard work this would not have been possible.

I wish to thank the farmers who have made us self-reliant in the production of foodgrains. We want to express our gratitude to the workers and agricultural labourers as it is their toil and hard work that has industrialised India.

India has emerged as a new power in the world. I am grateful to the Jawans of the country who have made sacrifices and have valiantly protected the unity and integrity of India and maintained peace in the region during these years. Be it Jawans on the borders or on high snow-clad mountain peaks, or be it our sailors with the Navy on the sea, be it in the Maldives to help a neighbouring country or be it in Sri Lanka to protect the Tamils, the Jawans and the officers of the Indian Forces have raised the prestige of India and have strengthened India. Similarly, the scientists of the country have also turned India into a new force by reaching new frontiers. Be it the test of the Prithvi missile or the launch of Agni, be it bio-technology for the benefit of farmers or development of new drugs, our scientists and technologists in different fields have charted new paths to remove poverty and unemployment and make India stronger.

I also wish to thank our administration because without an efficient administration the unity and integrity of the country cannot be so strong, peace and stability cannot be maintained and India could not have carved out a place for herself in the world. There may be a few deficiencies and weaknesses in our administration but there are many strong points without which India could not be strong and capable of marching on the road towards development.

I wish to thank our businessmen and industrialists as they have accelerated the pace of India's industrialisation. I also want to thank our public sector which has made its wholehearted contributions to India's development. I want to specially thank the women of India who have emerged as a new force during the last few years and have lent a new strength to India. I want to compliment the youth of India as they have set out on a new course to eliminate conservatism. For the first time, the youth will get an opportunity for active participation in India's politics. We have full faith in the youth of India; they have fought during the freedom struggle and they have also protected the frontiers of India. Today we have full confidence that the youth would root out conservatism, feudalism, casteism and communalism from the soil of India. This would be the real liberation of the country. I wish to thank the minorities of India who have made significant contributions in developing and strengthening the country. I am specially grateful to Harijans and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; without their moving forward India could not have marched ahead. Had they not joined together to strengthen the country, it would not have been possible for us to win freedom and to come out of that dark phase.

Your contribution has enabled India to stand with her head high in the in the world. We will demonstrate to the world with dignity that one can keep India backward. Now India is moving ahead towards development and progress. During these years we have achieved a lot, yet much remains to be done. There are several deficiencies. Gandhiji had talked of Gram Swaraj. Panditji made an attempt to start Panchayati Raj. Today, for the first time, we are transferring power to the people of India by passing



two Bills in the Lok Sabha. For the first time real Swaraj is being established. It is your own Raj. In spite of this we find that opposition forces are creating obstacles. They do not want to strengthen the hands of the people of India. They do not want that the people of India should decide their own course of development. The power-brokers, the capitalists, the conservatives and feudal forces are now coming together. They are joining hands to prevent the transfer of real power to the people of India. It is sad that communal forces and traitors also have combined with them. We have to face all of them because it is only by facing this challenge that we will be able to strengthen the hands of the people of India, give them social justice and provide strength to the weaker sections and better their lot. For the first time we are giving power to the weaker sections, women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in our polity and democracy by taking special steps to ensure that criminals and anti-social elements do not infiltrate into our democracy. For the first time, stern measures have been taken to keep them away from politics and the democratic process. We will complete this task despite all the challenges that we may face. After this we have to undertake at least two major tasks in the coming years. The first relates to justice.

Much has been done in India but one cannot honestly claim that justice is available in villages at the grassroots level. There is so much delay and expenditure involved that I think we cannot claim that justice is being done in the real sense. In the coming years we have to see that justice is done. Just as we are strengthening the Panchayati Raj institutions to make democracy strong and give impetus to development and just as we are strengthening the Nagar Palika institutions to provide resources for the development of urban areas of India, we will also take steps to ensure that justice is available. If it requires a change in the structure we are prepared to do that as we are not prepared to deny justice to the people.

We have the opportunity before us to give India a new personality in the world. Today we have an opportunity to make India as great as she

was before her slavery. Before India lost her freedom, people from different corners of the world came to discover her wealth and to acquire knowledge. But hundreds of years of slavery have emaciated India. India degenerated and became poor and weak. Today for the first time, we have an opportunity to restore India to the same old glorious position. We have to remove poverty and injustice from India. We have to make India self-reliant. We have to develop India into a great power in the world but not like other great powers who have risen by suppressing others. In pursuance of the ideals of Gandhiji, Panditji and Indiraji, India will not suppress anyone but would champion the cause of the poor of the world. India will generate a new spirit that would eliminate groupism and would establish the supremacy of humanity which would save the civilization and make it richer. Today we have an opportunity to make India a great nation. Let us take a pledge to make India great and strong and to take it forward. I thank you and it is my fervent hope that today on the auspicious occasion of Independence Day every Indian will place a hand on his or her heart and take the pledge to make India great and to take it to new heights of glory.