

Twenty-five years ago our National Flag was unfurled for the first time here at this spot. The entire nation awoke into a new life that day. Last night we paid our homage to those thousands of people whose services and sacrifices led us to freedom. Different types of people took part in our freedom struggle. Many among them were great revolutionaries but most of them joined the non-violent non-co-operation movement. It was the sacrifices of all of them which roused freedom consciousness in the country and forced the British to quit India. There were several others like men of the Garhwal Regiment, the Naval Ratings of Bombay and the I.N.A. who made many sacrifices for the cause of our freedom. There were so many of them that it is rather difficult to name them all. Most of them are no more with us now and we pay our homage to them. We also express our gratitude to others whom we are fortunate to have in our midst today. It is their selfless service and great sacrifices that brought us freedom.

Twenty-five years ago when we unfurled our flag here it was not the end of our fight but a beginning of a new fight— a fight against poverty and a fight to make freedom a reality for our teeming millions. All of us are partners in this great struggle and have to go a long way to achieve our objectives. We have to ensure a better life for our children and find more jobs for our young men. During the last 25 years we have covered a long journey, a journey not of comforts alone but of many hardships, difficulties and dangers. But, as you know, we are today stronger than ever before; we are more resolute and united and our democratic institutions have taken deeper roots.

However, we have to see that the pace of our progress is accelerated and we fulfil our pledges. As you know we have made some progress and have a number of achievements to our credit. But I regret to say that there are some people in our country who even question these achievements. They even questioned the desirability of our celebrating the Silver Jubilee of our Independence. This is a strange attitude and very difficult to understand. Can't they see the progress we have made so far? Perhaps they can't or perhaps they don't like it.

There is a mighty upsurge in India today and we all should try to gear ourselves to meet the challenges before us. We should strive for unity and strength to achieve our objectives. Any temporary difficulty or our failure to do things should not lead us to believe that there has been no progress. We do make mistakes sometimes but these cannot nullify our achievements. While we criticise ourselves for our shortcomings, we should not overlook our many achievements. We have to do some heart-searching and decide what the shape of things should be.

Almost every year, as you know, we face droughts in some parts of the country and floods in others. These bring misery and sufferings in their trail. But the impact of such tragedies today is not the same as it used to be years before. Previously, whenever there was drought in rural areas there was hardly any assistance from outside. But things are quite different now. We take immediate steps to rush aid to the affected areas and face the calamity unitedly. We cannot stop these calamities. We cannot prevent the vagaries of nature but we can always face them unitedly. A significant development we see is the increasing self-reliance among our people and a belief that they alone are the masters of their destiny. This is our greatest asset and a source of our real strength.

As you know we have made considerable progress in the fields of agriculture and industry. Twenty-five years ago when we became free our condition was really bad and we were full of anxiety. We were faced with so many problems and it looked as if we would not be able to solve them. Many people thought that India would not be able to preserve her independence. But these people were proved wrong. We were successful in solving our problems one by one. During these years we have made significant progress. Food production in the country has increased, a large number of new factories have come up. All the critical and complex problems were solved one by one. Production of steel and electricity has increased. Many heavy machines, which we were formerly importing, are now being manufactured in the country. The development of heavy industry has enabled us to manufacture other machines indigenously. It is true that

our production has not kept pace with the increasing demand. The more we produce the more we need to meet our demand which is largely due to rapid increase in our population. So we are always faced with the problem of how to meet the demand which is increasing day by day. Some people do not see things in proper perspective and try to belittle the achievements. Such persons who close their eyes to the realities are no friends of the people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Armed Forces for their heroic and courageous deeds. These brave soldiers and officers of our Army, Navy and Air Force have made great sacrifices to safeguard freedom of the country which has been attacked five times. I firmly believe that the freedom of India will always be safe in their hands. We express our gratitude and sympathies to the families of our brave soldiers and officers who lost their lives in the fighting. All of us including our army and police have to make a united effort to uplift the country. We fully realise that the real strength of a nation depends on its progress, on its ideology, on the unity of its people, on the readiness of its people to make sacrifices. We see lot of tension in the world today. The real question before us is whether we want to fritter away our energies in useless agitations and quarrels or whether we want to look into our future and act to make it really prosperous.

Today we find restlessness among our youth and others. This restlessness is not peculiar to us alone. This is a universal phenomenon today. Maybe, in India it is because of unemployment, maybe, it is because of poverty, but why we see this restlessness among youth in other countries where there is no unemployment or poverty. To my mind this restlessness is because we are emerging from one age and entering into another. And when such great transformation takes place it is bound to result in some restlessness, sorrow and suffering. We cannot remain stuck to the old order nor can we wish that there should be no change. We want to play our part in this change. These changes are of various kinds. In India we have poverty and it is necessary that we implement our development

programmes speedily to eradicate poverty and create conditions conducive to these changes. We have done a lot of things in this direction but we have still to do much more. To meet the unemployment problem we have to enforce programmes to remove it as soon as possible. It is not possible for me to go into details at the moment but these programmes have been explained in the Parliament and placed before the people at other forums. Some of these have already been undertaken and others are still to be taken up. These programmes have been designed to meet both the immediate and future conditions. There are many problems which we must solve. We cannot wait passively for their solutions. We ourselves have to shape our future. We want that every Indian should have a hand in shaping our destiny. It is true that we are now free but, as I said earlier yet to make this freedom real for our teeming millions. We have to build a society in which each individual can enjoy full freedom- economic, social and political. In fact, we have to build this kind of world society. We cannot isolate ourselves from the world today. We do not covet anyone's territory. We do not want to interfere in others' affairs. We want others also to follow the correct way like us. I think we have in the last few months shown the world something. You all know how we last year met the aggression against us. Our forces fought heroically and achieved a real victory. In fact it was a victory of an ideology, a way of thinking and the world could see it. This victory has given strength to India and has created unity and enthusiasm among our people.

We have never made an attack on anybody, nor have we tried to pressurise anyone. In fact, there are some who have tried to pressurise us. But, as you know, we have resisted all such pressures. We carefully choose our own way and do not get swayed by the currents. As you know there is not any readymade way. We ourselves have to make it, step by step, and it is possible we may sometimes make mistakes or grow complacent but it has to be of our own making. A nation's character like an individual's is built the hard way. The real strength of a man is his character and only a man who works hard is a man of character and not the one who leads a life of ease and extravagance. We do not want a nation which only

loves ease and comforts. We want a people who love working hard for their livelihood, a people who struggle to create better opportunities of life not only for themselves but for others also. I think our freedom will be complete only when we are able to create such conditions for our people.

I strongly feel that our independence would not be complete so long as we do not completely eliminate casteism from our society. We all must think as equals, citizens of India, an ancient country, which gave to the world a unique culture and high ideals. We have to show the world that we still value those high ideals whatever be our religion. There are many religions in India. If we follow our religion sincerely there can be no quarrels among us. No true religion teaches us to suppress those belonging to other religions. Toleration of others' views has been our tradition. We must maintain and strengthen this glorious tradition so that the entire mankind benefits from it.

I mentioned about our old revolutionaries and freedom fighters who are still in our midst today. We want inspiration from them. We want their blessings in shaping the future of this great country. To the young generation of India, I give my good wishes. It is they who are to build the India of our dreams. They are the custodians of the honour and security of India. Let us pledge ourselves to build a clean, progressive and a great Bharat.

The way this country will move forward is not yet known and I cannot tell it. But I know that an inner force, a new life is struggling to be born. With its birth, humanity will find a new way, a way to peace and co-operation among mankind which will make the world one family.

We have to remove not only economic poverty but the penury of our thinking. We have to bring about a new way of thinking. Our young men sometimes go astray and make mistakes but they have the strength to deliver the goods. It is time we make the best use of all the strength and knowledge that we possess to take the country forward so that it is able to help the rest of the world in moving along the correct path.

Recently, as you know, we have tried to come to an agreement with

our neighbouring country. People ask me if I trust that country or not. My answer to them is that I trust only one country and that is India. We have to trust our people, our unity and our strength. We want that there should always be friendship and peace in this sub-continent so that we can march forward speedily.