

We are again assembled here today on this auspicious occasion of the sixteenth anniversary of free India. Sixteen years ago today, we met here, below the Red Fort, and our National Flag fluttered here for the first time. We shall never forget that day when India attained freedom after a long and hard struggle and great suffering. We were kind of intoxicated with happiness and celebrated the day with fervour. We thought our days of toil were over and we would be able to build our country. But, very soon, the country was overtaken by a terrible calamity. In the wake of the partition of the country, there were riots in Pakistan and on this side of the border. These were ghastly events which shocked us and pained us. But we faced the situation and gradually brought it under control. Then came the assassination of Mahatmaji at the hands of an Indian. We could not have suffered a more rigorous sentence. Nevertheless, we asked ourselves what Gandhiji would have wanted us to do—would he want us to mourn and bewail or fight those evil forces and ideologies which could destroy the country. We faced them and triumphed over those forces.

A fresh wind began to blow again across the country and we decided to devote all our energies to build a new and prosperous India so that the people could move forward and strengthen the nation. Big plans were prepared which we have been implementing for the last 10 or 12 years. I believe, and I think you will agree with me, that the face of India has changed in these 10 or 12 years and is still changing. New cities have been built, thousands of new factories have been set up. Projects have been implemented and everywhere a measure of prosperity is discernible. No doubt, we are still very far from our goal. But these achievements cannot be denied. In recent years, our attention has, however, strayed from the fundamentals. We became complacent and felt that our freedom was secure and there was none who could threaten it. We had not yet grasped that freedom is not secure by itself. We did not realize that freedom calls for eternal vigilance, year in and year out, day in and day out. In the absence of vigilance, dangers arise. We had become standard-bearers of peace in the world and India was rightly regarded as a country which stood for peace. We still stand for peace. But weakness goes ill together with peace.

Peace can be secured by strength and endeavour, not by complacency. That way alone can peace be secure in the world and our voice can be heard with respect.

All of a sudden, aggression was committed on our borders last year by a country which we had looked upon as a friend. This naturally shocked us and we had to pass through hardships and difficulties. This also had its good consequences, because we were shaken out of our complacency and once again a climate of preparedness and sacrifice was generated. I still remember how our people, the ordinary people, offered to the nation all their possessions, cash, gold and silver. Those who had the least gave the most. People forgot their mutual conflicts, put them aside and realized that their first duty was to face the danger to the freedom of the country. The spirit of unity manifested itself in the country, which proved that notwithstanding the apparent differences, there is an underlying unity which comes to surface at the right time.

Our morale was high. We strove to prepare for defence and to raise our strength, and the country did become strong. But popular enthusiasm is not enough preparedness. Preparing for the defence of the country means a thousand different activities to make the equipment and material which the defence forces need. Backing this all, are the countless farms of India which produce foodgrains and other foodstuff. Preparedness therefore means all-round effort, everyone in this place striving hard to produce to the limit of his capacity so that our economy is strengthened. We have attended to these matters and some progress has been made and is still continuing.

But again the state of complacency is returning because the hostilities have ended. In place of the unity and harmony that were witnessed, the old controversies and conflicts which weaken the country have reappeared. Unfortunately, this is our old failing, reasserting itself when we are not face to face with danger. But we are facing continuous danger on our borders and it becomes our first task to defend the country against it. Other things can wait. Who will respect that country which cannot

defend its independence and its territorial integrity? Such a nation is even powerless to make any progress. No doubt, at this moment the biggest task facing us is to raise the strength of the country, increase production and banish poverty so that everyone has an equal opportunity for progress, and the millions of our people and our children have a chance to lead a better life and to get the good things of life. But all this presupposes that we uphold our honour and make our freedom secure. Any slackening in this respect will leave the country disheartened, weak, powerless. A free country which wants to maintain its freedom gives top priority to its defences. Everything else comes afterwards. On this question there can be no argument, although there is scope for discussion. We have to speak with one voice. The unity of India, which is most vital to us, comes first—the unity which manifested itself last year and early this year but which we have been neglecting after the fighting stopped. It is unfortunate that again conflicting and dissenting voices have begun to be heard and small and big controversies have erupted.

Ours is a free country and everyone has a right to free discussion and criticism which one can freely exercise. But with rights go duties and obligations. Anyone who neglects his duties cannot protect his rights. The national duty today is to defend the country, to maintain unity and increase the nation's strength, irrespective of religion or State. Everybody has his rights but if we neglect this duty we weaken our claim to those rights. There are several rights which cannot be fully operated today. All our citizens are entitled to a happy life, to be freed of the burden of poverty and to expect opportunities of progress for their children. We are marching towards that goal and we think the day will come when it will be achieved. The fact, however, remains that we are far from that goal and we can reach it only when we fulfil our duties.

When I say that the country is facing dangers on the borders, I am not suggesting that something is about to happen. Rather that this new situation that has arisen has created new dangers on our borders, which we appear to have forgotten. Of course, we have to station our troops and

our Air Force to guard against this menace, but the Army or the Air Force alone cannot protect the country. Nowadays, the defence of the country requires all the people, men and women, to do something or the other in that cause. The defences have to be strengthened by the endeavour of the entire nation, by its unity and ability to work together, in farms and factories or wherever we happen to be. We should all prepare ourselves to meet the danger so that we could strengthen our country and thus strengthen the Army.

It is a strange world in which we live, a world which is changing. On the one hand, there is a danger of a world war in which nuclear weapons may be used. On the other hand, there are also some favourable trends. Recently a treaty was concluded in Moscow on nuclear tests by the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain. We and other countries acceded to the treaty later. The agreement does not eliminate the danger of war but it shows a way to bring war and warlike tendencies under control and to ensure peace in the world. Seven or eight years ago, we had made this proposal in the United Nations, which it has now given the shape of a treaty in Moscow. We were the first to raise our voice for this kind of arrangement. We are, therefore, particularly happy that our proposal has been acted upon and hope that a move having been initiated, further progress will continue to be made and the world would be rid of the nuclear danger. Young men and women today face a life full of dangers as well as hopes. It is a good thing that we live in such times because in a situation like this a nation can become strong and courageous. Soft living is not good for any nation because it weakens the people. I wish to congratulate the people, particularly the young men and women and the children, that they live in an age full of tests and trials more difficult than the examinations they have to take in schools and colleges. The tests in life are harder and bigger and no book can help us in facing them. To face these tests and trials and to emerge victorious, we need character, a stout heart and mind. As the years roll by and free India grows up, we have to grow in strength along with it and never permit ourselves to become complacent. We may have two, three or even a thousand different views, but so far as the unity of India and

its security and prosperity are concerned, we have to speak with one voice. There is no scope for difference of opinion in this matter. We can argue about the approaches and methods, but whenever we take any action we should ask ourselves whether by that step we are serving India, strengthening its unity, helping in the defence of the country or weakening it. This should be our yardstick in whatever we do because often we are carried away in the heat of factional controversies and weaken the country. We should remember all this because the days to come will not be easy ones. However we look at the situation, we are going to face a difficult time.

After the attack on our borders, we were compelled to take certain measures which we did not like. The military expenditure had to be increased, more than double, and for has to go on for ever. Recently, when aggression was that taxes had to be levied and increased. Nobody likes taxes, neither the taxpayer nor the government. But when the country is in danger, those who are talking about their profits and not about the danger hardly serve the country. Money we can earn and spend, but the country committed, everywhere, whether in our Parliament or in the country at large, we rose to the occasion and despite the hardships, we faced it with firmness and dignity. No matter how much we have to suffer, even at the cost of our lives, we have to face the danger of aggression so that India may live.

Now, we have to face all kinds of dangers, internal and external, and in so doing if we have to carry heavier burdens we should be prepared to do so. When nations go to war, the people have to carry tremendous burdens and sometimes a country is laid waste. We are not facing such a war at the moment. Nobody knows what the future holds for us. But to avert such a war we have to be ever vigilant and we have to undergo hardships.

We have a reputation for being a peace-loving people. The fact that we are expanding our defence capacity and giving military training to our young men does not mean that we have given up our principles and policy of peace. We shall follow that policy in any situation and try to resolve disputes with other countries by peaceful means, if it is possible to do so.

We do not like war which can bring ruin to the country and cause hardships to the people. But there could be no peace without honour, certainly not by submission to evil, out of fear. If the people are seized by fear, they weaken the country and tarnish its fair name. Thus, while we prepare with all our strength for the defence of the country, we shall tread the path of peace. Whenever we can solve any problem in the world, any issue concerning us, we shall always resort to a peaceful course, but not to the detriment of India's honour. To uphold that honour we shall prepare in full measure. This preparedness does not merely mean arms and armaments. It means that every man, woman and child in the country has to offer something, has to be ready to work with determination and in co-operation with others. Very few people in our country know how to march in step. Marching in step is not in itself a virtue but it stands for working together. An army is strong because the soldiers work together, march in step. They are disciplined and follow rules. We have to teach to our countrymen discipline, the outlook of a soldier.

It would be a good thing for our future if we prepare ourselves in this manner and when we are out of the present danger, we would be a strong country with courage and confidence in ourselves. Then we would be able to march and the road to prosperity with ease. Nations become great by self-confidence, not by relying on others. You can be friends with others, but you have to rely on yourselves. There can be co-operation with others, but you have to do your own thinking and work with your own hands. Any country which forgets this and is frightened and loses self-confidence begins to decline, faces ruin and lowers itself. What greater indignity can there be for India than that fear should grip us and we lose confidence in ourselves? Whatever work is there, it is we who have to do it, although we have friends in the world and we have to maintain that friendship and take their help. The big countries in the world have helped us and we are grateful for that, not only for the help but for their sympathy. We have to march ahead towards our goal on the path we have chosen for ourselves, and we shall attain that goal. We have to remember this principle and ensure the progress of the country. Relying on ourselves and with the help

of friends, we have to solve our economic problems, and so change our country that it would be able to stand on its legs.

I particularly want that the millions of our children have an opportunity for growth, for education and to serve the country and to serve themselves. Let us build an India in which these opportunities are available and there are no differences of high and low. This is our vision of India. Of course, the Planning Commission and other offices of Government are working for this purpose, but as you know the Government and the Planning Commission can only show the way. The work has to be done by millions of our people. If they cannot do it, neither the Planning Commission nor the Government can achieve anything. Whether it is defence or development, it is the people who have to carry out the work, not those sitting in offices. Our task is to awaken the 450 million people of India and to show the path. It is for them to march along that road and reap the benefit. Whatever happened on our border this year was, I think, all to the good because it will strengthen and fortify us. It would prepare the country for progress, provided we do not lose heart. Our people have never trodden the path of cowardice.

I again congratulate you on the 16th anniversary of our freedom and hope that you will remember the day. Free India is still a child, for what are sixteen years in the life of a country ? Of course, ours is an ancient country. I hope it makes progress, becomes strong and holds its head high in the world. Let us remember these things, particularly the fact that we are all brethren in this country; wherever we live, and whatever our religion, we have to work together. Whoever forgets this fact does not serve the country well.