

We have assembled once again at this historic place. This day is a milestone in our history and gives us an opportunity to look back on our achievements and failures. At the same time it gives us an opportunity to look ahead and see which way we want to go and which way we are going.

I give you my best wishes on this day. This is the day when we think with gratitude of our great leaders and the martyrs who laid down their lives and sacrificed their all for the good of the country. We think of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. We think of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, whose name is linked with this Red Fort. And what Shri Jawaharlal Nehru has done for this country can be seen from one corner of the country to the other.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place fifty years ago when a large number of men, women and children, young and old alike, fell victim to a storm of bullets. That was a turning point in the freedom struggle of our country. We observed the 50th anniversary of the tragedy this year. Soon after the massacre, we had pledged ourselves to complete Independence on the banks of the Ravi. And then at Karachi, at Lucknow, at Avadi and at Bhubaneswar, we took one big step after another along our chosen path.

We all know what has happened in the country during these years and the progress we have made in many directions. The production of food-grains has increased. By the abolition of Zamindari we have tried to relieve the distress of our oppressed peasants. The progress in the field of industry is not merely confined to the expansion of existing industries but includes the setting up of many important new industries after the attainment of Independence. Our effort has been to establish big industries only in the public sector and to abolish monopoly; but we know that we have been successful in this only to a limited extent. Anyhow, some very big industries have been established in the public sector; and more are coming up. There has been some criticism of this sector, but if an honest appraisal is made, we will find that on the whole these enterprises are doing very well.

Our peasants particularly are well aware of how they have benefited

from these projects. Their needs of water, electricity and many other things have been met. We also know that there are a few industries which are not running as satisfactorily as they should, but we are doing our best to improve their condition. These industries are not the property of the Government but of the people. The earlier they start yielding profits and the better they function, the more the masses would benefit from them.

Our country is forging ahead in every field. Of course, there have been crises in the life of the nation. The wars on our frontiers, droughts, communal riots and other disturbances—all these have done some harm to the country. But these difficulties and calamities have also added to our experience. We have learnt a lot from them and they have made our will stronger and our steps more resolute.

Today we can be sure that we have conquered the darkness. For the first time in the last three or four years, there is brightness on the horizon. Whereas many areas, cities and dwellings are bright with this light, we cannot afford to forget those households which are still engulfed in darkness. How can we forget those peasants whose lands have no irrigation facilities; how can we forget the crores of Harijans and Girijans [hill people] and members of backward tribes who live in mountains and jungles and whose houses are still denied this brightness. We had given them hope and assurance that after Independence they would have a better life, but I am afraid their hopes have not been fulfilled.

To accomplish these unfinished tasks, we will have to move more resolutely towards the goal of socialism we have set ourselves. This path has been chosen by the people of India through the democratic process and it continues to have their approval. One very significant step in this direction has been taken only recently. You all know what it is the nationalisation of banks. I am fully conscious of the tremendous and spontaneous reception it has received from the people. A large number of people— big and small— came to meet me, wrote to me and sent me messages, to tell me that this was a right step in the right direction.

There still are many people for whom we have to do something.

Ricksha-wallas, tonga-wallas, stone-breakers— all these people come to me. These are the people who are undergoing the worst hardships in our big cities. We have to enable these people to share this new light and to infuse in them a new hope for a better and richer life. No single step can remove all their difficulties, but a beginning has to be made in improving their condition or in helping them to change their professions. We have also to solve the unemployment problem and to provide equal opportunities to all.

Our society, the Government, and the people, all of us have to unite and help these down-trodden people and to assure them a new life. We are forging ahead but sometimes suspicion and anger are created against the minorities, giving rise to violence. This also disturbs our unity which, in turn, disturbs the peace in the country. We all know that if peace is disturbed our production cannot increase. Every section of the people has some problems and difficulties and as we go ahead some new difficulties crop up and we have to face them. For this we want all our strength, and this strength can be conserved and utilised only when we work together to solve each other's problems and difficulties.

When banks were nationalised some rumours were set afloat that this step was directed against a particular section of our society. I want to make it perfectly clear that we do not propose to do anything against anybody. We want all of us to march forward together. But I want to assure the rich and the capitalists that the step that we have taken is not directed against them. It is only in the interest of the people, and a measure which is in the interest of the masses is in their interest also.

I am pained to learn that some voices have been raised against the step that we have taken. It has been said that banks were nationalised at the instance of some foreign power. I want to make it perfectly clear that whatever steps we are taking are at the behest of the masses and in the interest of our democracy. I know that the spirit of democracy is well entrenched in the hearts of the Indian people. I am also sure that they will never do anything which may result in any harm to our country or which

may compromise our Independence.

When Mahatma Gandhi started the freedom movement, a great revolution took place in our country. But he brought about this revolution with great humility and with the co-operation of all. He emancipated the country from the clutches of a foreign power. The revolution that took place has not ended yet, because in a fast changing world, our country and society have to keep changing constantly.

The path we have chosen is the right path. It is a path forged by our history and culture. But why is it that, in spite of the considerable progress we have made, the minds of some people are still disturbed and there is dissatisfaction. Something seems to be lacking. Man wants something more than progress and material advancement, and there comes a time in man's life when a revolution emerges from his heart, from the innermost recesses of his being and when he can recognise his soul more deeply and can view his surroundings more clearly. Such a time has come in the life of India today. There is a rush of fresh air caused by the sudden opening of a door. Those accustomed to living in a closed atmosphere are worried by the blowing of this breeze; but there are many others who are tired of suffocation and would welcome the new strength and life they receive from this breeze.

Twenty-two years ago India awoke in freedom in the middle of the night. My father declared on that memorable occasion that it was a tryst with destiny. We have again reached a similar turning point and the future is unfolding before us; we have to adopt new paths to take our country rapidly ahead.

This is the year of the Gandhi Centenary. We have not only to keep the programmes of Gandhiji fresh in our memory but also to remember the basic ideals and principles of Gandhiji and to familiarise the new generation with them. Another great man is to visit our country in the near future. All of you must have heard the name of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He was the greatest disciple of Gandhiji. Our people called him the Frontier Gandhi and showered upon him deep respect and affection. I have no doubt that when

he visits India we will welcome him with the same affection.

This is the age of science. This is also the age of the youth. They have to follow new paths. They do not have to look towards anybody else, because those who look towards others for guidance are left behind. We have to show a new path to our young people. I know that they are endowed with courage and determination. It is only by cultivating courage, hope, self-reliance and self-confidence that we can make progress and carry our masses forward.

The tricolour we salute is a symbol of our democracy, of unity and peace, of development and progress of our country. We have to cultivate all these qualities in ourselves. It is our duty to preserve the honour of this wheel of peace which was given to us by the great Ashoka.

Standing before you here today, I can assure you that whatever I am and whatever work I do, the paramount thing is that I will always work in your interest, in the interest of the masses. In this connection I want to give you the talisman which Gandhiji gave us. He had said that if you are assailed by doubts while taking a step you should always think of the lowliest and the weakest of our countrymen. If an action is going to improve the lot of the poorest and the weakest then it is the right action, and if you proceed on that path all your doubts will be removed. It is in this spirit that I want to go ahead. We have made great progress but we have forgotten the common man. Wherever we go we find brave slogans and nobody cares to find out how these slogans are going to benefit the poor and the needy.

Today we have taken a new turn. A new dawn has set in. I believe that if the youth, the peasants and the labourers, whether they are in the cities or in rural areas, follow this new path, they will bring about a new wave of enthusiasm and produce a new spirit of sacrifice. We should always think of the masses, of the poor people of the country. Only by raising them can we raise ourselves. If we have strength and if we have compassion in our hearts, then alone can we realise the difficulties of others and sympathise with others; then alone can we accomplish big tasks together. I have every reason to believe that the people of India will always

stand together in unity.

Today, I give you all my good wishes. We have taken steps in a new direction; new vistas have opened before us; and a cool and fresh breeze is blowing about our faces. No one need be afraid of this fresh breeze. All of us should march forward with courage. If we can do so, we can certainly achieve something big.

We have been a peaceful nation. At the same time we are aware that peace does not mean weakness, that peace is achieved by strength, self-reliance and self-confidence. I want every Indian cultivate these qualities. Mahatma Gandhi produced freedom-fighters out of a poor and defenceless people. We can further strengthen that spirit, because today our people are more knowledgeable, more competent and more determined than in the past.

Many children are sitting in front of me. They are the citizens of tomorrow and we expect great things from them. We want them to have equal opportunities. We have to reduce the disparity between the high and the low, between the rich and the poor, between one section of society and another. We have also to reduce the gap between what we are and what we want to become. Now let us raise the national slogan together. Jai Hind.