

My dear countrymen, I convey my best wishes to all of you on this auspicious occasion of Independence Day. Today, the country is brimming with self-confidence. The country is scaling new heights by working extremely hard, with a resolve to realize its dreams. Today's dawn has brought a new spirit, a new enthusiasm, a new zeal and a new energy with it.

My dear countrymen, in our country, there is a Neelakurinji flower which blooms once every 12 years. This year, Neelakurinji is in full bloom on the hills of Southern Nilgiri like the Ashok Chakra (the wheel of Ashoka) in the Tricolour on our Independence Day.

My dear countrymen, we are celebrating this festival of independence at a time when our daughters from the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, have come back after circumnavigating the seven seas. They have returned after unfurling the Tricolour in the seven seas, colouring their waters with the hues of our Tricolor.

My dear countrymen, we are celebrating this festival of independence at a time when the Mount Everest has been conquered many times; several brave-hearts and many of our daughters have unfurled the Tricolour atop the Mount Everest. However, during this festival of independence, I will remember our young tribal children from remote forest areas, who have unfurled the Tricolour on the Mount Everest, further enhancing its glory.

My dear countrymen, the sessions of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha have concluded recently, and you would have seen that the proceedings were conducted in a very orderly manner, and in a way, they were entirely dedicated to the cause of social justice.

Displaying utmost sensitivity and alertness, our Parliament has made the social justice framework stronger to protect the interests of the weaker

sections of society – be it a Dalit, a deprived or exploited person or women.

The demand to confer constitutional status on the OBC Commission had existed for years. This time, our Parliament has accorded Constitutional status to this Commission, and in doing so, has made an efforts to protect the interests of the Backward and the Most Backward classes.

Today, we are celebrating the festival of independence at a time when news reports have brought in a new consciousness in the country. Today, every Indian, living in any nook and corner of the world, takes pride in the fact that India has become the sixth largest economy of the world. We are celebrating this Independence Day in a positive atmosphere amidst such positive chain of events.

Under the leadership of respected Bapu, lakhs of people sacrificed their lives and spent their youth in prisons to win freedom for our country. Many great revolutionaries embraced the gallows bravely. Today on behalf of my countrymen, I pay homage to those brave freedom fighters and salute them from the bottom of my heart. Our soldiers and Paramilitary forces lay down their lives to uphold the dignity of the tricolour that inspires us to hold our heads high through life and death. Our Police forces serve the country day and night to provide safety and security to the people.

From the ramparts of the Red Fort with the Tricolour as witness, I salute all the soldiers of the army, the para-military forces and the police for their dedicated service, valour and hard work. My best wishes are always with them.

These days, we are receiving the news of good rainfall as well as floods from different parts of the country. I want to reassure the people who have lost their loved ones and are in distress, that the country is with them in their hour of crisis to help them overcome this difficult situation. I share the grief of those who have lost their near and dear ones in this natural

calamity.

My dear countrymen,

The next year will mark 100 years of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre. Our masses had sacrificed their lives for the country's freedom at a time when atrocities had crossed all limits. The Jallianwallah Bagh incident reminds us of the sacrifices made by the brave hearts and is an inspiration to us. I salute all the brave people from the depths of my heart.

My dear countrymen,

Our freedom has come at a price. Under the leadership of Bapu and the revolutionaries, many heroes, many satyagrahis, brave men and women and youth participated in the freedom struggle of the country. While striving for the country's freedom, they suffered imprisonment and spent the prime of their youth in jails, yet they nurtured the dreams of a glorious India even through all the suffering.

Many years ago, the national poet from Tamil Nadu, Subramaniam Bharti translated his vision of the country into words

“எல்லாரும் அமரனிலை அடிதுமனான

முரடி அடி இந்தியா உலாగிரிக்கு அலிக்கும”.

– (“Ellarum amarnillai aaedumnaan

muraiai India ulagirakku allikkum”).

What was the dream that he envisioned after Independence? Subramania Bharti said that India will show the way for the entire world to break free from every form of bondage.

My dear countrymen,

After Independence, in order to realize the dreams of such great personalities, to meet the aspirations of freedom fighters and to fulfill the hopes and expectations of the citizens of the country, India drafted an inclusive Constitution under the leadership of respected Baba Saheb Ambedkar ji. This inclusive Constitution is the harbinger of a resolve to build a New India. It has brought with it some responsibilities for us and has also set a few boundaries on us. Our Constitution has been guiding us in realizing our dreams by stating that every section of the society and every geographical part of India must get an equal opportunity in the quest to forge ahead.

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Constitution also guides us to draw inspiration from our Tricolor. It indicates that we should ensure justice for the poor, equal opportunity for all to move ahead, our lower middle class, middle class and higher middle class should not face any obstacle in their growth, the Government should not come in the way, social systems should not curb their dreams. We should create an enabling environment that provides them maximum opportunities to grow and blossom, and they should be allowed to flourish without limitation.

Be it our elderly, differently-abled, our women, marginalized or deprived people, or our Adivasi brethren living in the forests, everyone must get an opportunity to grow, as per their hopes and aspirations. We aspire for an India that is strong and self-reliant, a nation that maintains a steady pace of progress, an India that keeps scaling new heights; an India that enjoys goodwill in the world. Not only this, we want that India should also shine in the world – we want to build such an India.

My dear countrymen, I have shared my vision for TEAM INDIA earlier too. When 125 crore countrymen become partners, then each and every citizen joins us in the progress of the country. When 125 crore dreams, 125 crore resolves, 125 crore efforts, move in the right direction to attain desired goals then nothing is unattainable.

Dear brothers and sisters, with utmost humility and respect, I would like to share that in 2014, 125 crore citizens did not rest after voting for the Government. The citizens did not stop at government formation, but worked to build the nation. They have come together, were together and will continue to be together. I feel that this synergy of 125 crore active citizens from more than 6 lakhs villages is the real strength of our nation. Today, we celebrate the birth anniversary of Shri Aurobindo. He said something very pertinent – What is Nation? What is our Motherland? It is not a mere piece of land, not just an identity, nor is it a figment of imagination. The Nation is a repository of a great force manifested through many organized units to give it a concrete shape. It is this thought of Sri Aurobindo which is uniting the country and taking it ahead. That we are actually moving ahead is difficult to comprehend unless we know from where we started. If we don't look at from where we began our journey, it will not be possible to assess how far we have come. Precisely for this reason, if we consider 2013 as the base year and take into consideration the work that has been done in the last four years, you will be surprised to see the speed at which the country is moving and the pace at which the progress is being made. Take the case of toilets. If we had continued with the same speed of constructing toilets as in 2013, then to achieve 100% target would have taken decades.

If we talk about providing electricity to villages on the basis of work done in 2013, it would have taken a couple of more decades to accomplish this work. If we talk about providing smoke free LPG gas connection to the poor and to the poor mothers, at the rate in which it was done in 2013, it could not have been completed even in a 100 years. If we had maintained the

speed of 2013 in laying optical fibre network in villages, then we would not have been able to accomplish the task for generations together. We will strive to maintain the same pace of development.

Brothers and sisters, the country has huge expectations, the country has a lot of requirements and to fulfill those, it is imperative for the central government and the state governments to work together steadily and continuously. Today, we can see a sea change in the country although the country is same, the soil is same, the wind is same, the sky is same, the sea is same, the government offices are same, the files are same and the decision making process remains the same. However, the country has been experiencing change for the last four years. A new spirit, new energy, new resolve, new determination and new inspiration is taking the country forward. This is why the country has doubled the pace of construction of the highways. The construction of new houses has gone up four times in the villages. The food production in the country today has reached an all-time high; there has been a record production of mobile phones; the sale of tractors has touched a new high. On the one hand, a record number of tractors are being bought by our farmers today, at the same time, the country has witnessed a record number of aeroplane purchases since independence. Toilets are being built in schools; new IIMs, new IITs and new AIIMS are being established. Giving momentum to Skill Development Missions, the country is setting up new centers in small towns. At the same time, our tier-2 and tier-3 cities are being flooded with start-up enterprises, bringing regeneration.

Brothers and Sisters, Digital India is now making inroads into our villages. As a government sensitive to the needs of people, efforts are being made to turn Digital India into a reality. At the same time, work is also progressing with the same dedication to compile dictionary and common signs for my differently-abled brothers and sisters. While on the one hand, our farmers are working on modern agricultural techniques like micro irrigation, drip irrigation and sprinklers, on the other hand, 99 big closed irrigation projects

have also been revived. Our soldiers reach out to provide relief and rescue operations during natural calamities. While our soldiers display exemplary courage in reaching out to rescue the people in difficulties, they have also shown a steely resolve to carry out surgical strikes and vanquish our enemies.

Take a glance at the vast canvass of the development in our country- from one end to the other, one can witness the progress of the country that is moving ahead with new energy and enthusiasm. I hail from Gujarat. There is a saying in Gujarati 'Nishan Chuk Maaf Lekin Nahi Maaf Nichu Nishan' which means one should have big aims and dreams. However, for that, one has to strive hard and be answerable. But if the aims are not big, targets are not far-sighted, decisions are also not taken. Development comes to a halt. That is why my dear brothers and sisters, it is necessary for us to move ahead with big aims and resolve. When targets are vague, when the spirit is not strong, then important decisions in our social life also get held up for years. Take for instance the case of MSP - economists, farmer organizations, farmers as well as political parties had been demanding, that farmers should get an MSP which is one and a half times of their investment. The matter was debated for years, files moved to and fro, and but was stuck. Finally, we took the decision. We took a bold decision of giving the farmers the MSP which is one and half times their investment.

There was unanimity on GST. Everyone wanted GST but they could not arrive at a decision because while on the subject, they were thinking in terms of their vested interests and whether this will translate into electoral gains. Today, with the help of small traders, their open mindedness and their attitude of accepting the new, the country has implemented GST. A new found confidence has been generated in the business community. The small entrepreneurs, small businessmen who faced teething difficulties in adopting GST, accepted the challenge and the country is now moving ahead.

Today, we have enacted laws on Insolvency and Bankruptcy to strengthen the banking sector. Who opposed them earlier? Taking decisions requires conviction, force, confidence and complete dedication to the good of the common man. Why was the Benami property law not enforced earlier? The Benami property laws are implemented only when there is courage and a determination to do something for the country. The Jawans of our defence forces were demanding one-rank one-pension for several decades. They were not resorting to agitation because they are disciplined, but nobody was paying heed to their voices. Somebody needed to take a decision in this regard. You gave us the responsibility of taking this decision and we fulfilled it positively.

My dear brothers and sisters,

We are not the kind of people who work in the interest of the party. We are capable of taking tough decisions because national interest is topmost in our priority.

My dear brothers and sisters,

In this era of global economy, the entire world is looking at every development in India - big or small, with deep interest and hope and expectations. You may recall the comments made about India prior to 2014, by eminent international institutions, top economists of the world, and by those considered authorities on the subject. There was a time when the Indian economy was considered risky by experts. But now the same experts and the institutions have expressed confidence that our reform momentum has strengthened our economic fundamentals. How have things changed? There was a time when the world used to comment about red tape in India but now they talk about Red Carpet. We have reached the 100th spot in Ease of Doing Business ranking. Today, the entire world is looking at this achievement with pride. There was a time when the world perceived India as a country with 'policy paralysis' and 'delayed reforms'.

Old newspaper clippings confirm this view. However, today the world opinion about India has changed and they talk about our focus on reform, perform and transform. This follows from a series of time bound policy decisions. There was a time when the world counted India among the 'fragile five'. They were concerned that India was pulling down the world economy but now their tone has changed as India has become a multi-trillion dollar investment destination.

My dear brothers and sisters,

While engaging with India, the investors used to bemoan the lack of infrastructure, the blackouts due to power shortage and the bottlenecks. The same set of experts who had earlier dubbed India as a 'sleeping elephant' are now saying that 'sleeping elephant' has woken up and started running. Economists and international institutions are saying that India will provide momentum to the world economy for the next three decades and will spur the growth of the world.

Today, India's stature at International fora has risen greatly. India's voice is being heard in every organization of which she is a member. India is playing a crucial role in shaping up the discourse and providing leadership to these organizations. We are raising our voice at international fora.

My dear countrymen, for years, we waited seeking membership to some international organizations, but today, our country has become a member of innumerable organizations. Today, India offers a ray of hope for those who are concerned with environmental issues and global warming. Today India has become the flag bearer of International Solar Alliance in the world. Today, every country of the world is keen to welcome any Indian stepping on its soil. A new consciousness is visible in their eyes, when they look at an Indian. The strength of the Indian passport has multiplied manifold. This has instilled a new self-confidence, fresh energy and a resolve in every Indian to move ahead with new hope.

My dear countrymen, if an Indian is in trouble or distress in any part of the world, he can rest assured that his country is with him at every step. Several recent incidents bear testimony to this fact.

My dear countrymen, just as the perspective of the world towards India has transformed, similarly, there was a time when the news from India's North-Eastern part used to be dominated with content that one wished were not there. However, today my dear brothers and sisters, North-East is coming up with positive and inspiring stories. North-East today is shining in the field of sports.

My dear brothers and sisters, today we are receiving news from North-East that the last village has been electrified and the entire village danced the whole night. We are hearing more such news from the North East about highways, railways, airways, waterways and information ways (i-ways) coming to the region. The work of installing electric transmission lines across the North-East is progressing at a rapid pace. Today youth from the North-East are establishing BPOs in the region. Today, new educational institutions are being set up and the North-East India is becoming the new hub for organic farming. North-East is going to host the Sports University.

Brothers and sisters, there was a time when the North-East used to feel that Delhi is very distant. Within four years, we have brought Delhi to the doorsteps of North-East.

Brothers and sisters, today, about 65% of the population in the country is below 35 years of age. We are proud of our country's youth. Our country's youngsters have completely transformed the meaning of all standards of the economy. They have infused new colours to the country's standard of progress. There was a time when only big cities used to hog all the limelight. Today, our country is talking about Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities and paying attention to the youngsters engaged in modern agriculture in the

rural areas. The youth of our country has completely transformed the nature of jobs. Today the youngsters of the country are taking the nation to greater heights by exploring and engaging in new fields such as Start-ups, BPOs, E-commerce, mobility etc.

My dear countrymen, 13 crore Mudra Loans has been a major achievement. More so, if it includes 4 crore youth who have taken the loan for the first time with the aspiration to become self-reliant and are promoting self-employment. This in itself is a great example of the changing ecosystem. In an endeavor to realize the dream of Digital India, several Common Service Centres are being managed by young girls and boys in more than 3 lakhs villages today. These centres are rendering “on-the-click global connect”/“anytime-anywhere connectivity” services to every citizen in the villages with the optimal utilization of Information Technology.

Talking about infrastructure, whether it be speed of rails, roads, I-ways, highways or a new airport, our nation is witnessing fast paced development.

Brothers and Sisters, scientists of our nation have also left no stone unturned in bringing immense glory to our country. In the global context, as well as fulfilling the requirements of the country, it is a matter of great pride that our scientists launched more than 100 satellites in one go leaving the world astonished. That's the capability of Indian scientists which has made the world stand up and applaud. Successful launch of Mangalyaan in the very first attempt itself stands as testimony to the expertise and endeavors of our scientists. This feat of successful in orbit launch of Mangalyaan speaks volumes about the capabilities of our scientists. In days to come, thanks to the futuristic vision, innovativeness and creativity of our scientists we are confident of launching NavIC, the first indigenous Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS). This navigation system will guide fishermen and other citizens through Satellite signals.

My dear countrymen, today from the ramparts of the Red Fort, I am delighted to share a good news. Our country is undoubtedly progressing fast in its space missions. However, we have a dream; our scientists have a dream. We have resolved that by 2022, when India celebrates 75 years of Independence or maybe even before that, certainly some of our young boys and girls will unfurl the Tricolour in space. With Mangalyaan our scientists have proved their capabilities. I feel proud to announce that very soon as a part of our Manned-Space mission, we shall be sending an Indian into space. This will be done through the pursuit of our esteemed scientists, and we will proudly find ourselves as the fourth such nation to have launched a successful Man Space Mission.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to congratulate our scientists and technicians for such a great accomplishment. Today our warehouses are filled with food grains. I sincerely acknowledge the role of our agricultural scientists, cultivators and farmers in successfully steering the green revolution across decades.

But my brothers and sisters, times have changed now. Our farmers and the agricultural markets have to face global challenges and competition. As the population increases, land falls short. Hence, the changing times demand that our agricultural methods should also be modern and more scientific; we have to take the process forward with technology. Precisely for this reason we are focusing on change and bringing in modern methods in the agricultural sector.

We have a vision to double the farmers' income by the 75th year of Independence. Some people have doubts, which is quite natural, but we are determined. Hum makkhan par lakeer nahi, patthar par lakeer kheenchne waale hain (We don't promise things lightly, we mean to keep our word). To keep our promises, we have to work hard, we have to plan and we have to put our heart and soul into fulfilling it. So in order to realize

this promise by 75th year of Independence, we want to move along with the farmers in that direction by bringing modernity and diversity in agricultural sector. We want to bring value addition right from seeds to marketing. We want to modernize. Some new crops are giving record yields. For the first time we are moving towards agriculture export policy so that our farmers can also face global competition with confidence. Today we can see a new agricultural revolution. Organic farming, Blue revolution, sweet revolution and solar farming have opened up new vistas.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that today our country is the second highest fish producer in the world and is on the verge of reaching the top position soon. The export of honey has doubled. The sugarcane farmers are happy that ethanol production has tripled. It means, in rural economy other businesses allied to agriculture are also as important as agriculture. We are developing village resources by spending crores of rupees through women self help groups.

Khadi is associated with the name of respected Bapu. I want to humbly submit that the sale of khadi products since independence has doubled. This has generated employment for the poor.

My brothers and sisters, the farmers of my country are emphasizing on solar farming now. Apart from farming, they can earn money by selling power generated through solar farming. The people who spin charkha, the people who are associated with handloom are also earning their livelihood.

My dear brothers and sisters, economic development in our country is important, but more than anything else, human dignity is supreme. Without human dignity, no country can move forward in a balanced way. So to protect human dignity, we have to move ahead with those schemes which will ensure respectable lives for people. The policies, traditions and intentions should be such that ordinary people, including the poorest of the poor can get a chance to live with equal dignity.

So we have provided gas connection to the poor through Ujjawala Yojana. We have provided electricity to the poor through Saubhagya Yojana. We are emphasizing on moving ahead with the concept of 'Shrameva Jayate'.

Only yesterday, we heard the President's address to the nation. He described in great detail the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan. Whenever, there is talk about Government, it is said that policies are framed but there is no last mile delivery. The President described well how this campaign that was launched in Delhi has now spread to 65000 villages in aspirational districts, to the huts of the poor; how it is working in the backward villages.

My dear countrymen, when I talked about cleanliness from the Ramparts of Red Fort in 2014, some people made fun. Some of them even said the Government had many things to do, why is it wasting its energy on an issue like cleanliness. But my dear brothers and sisters, in a recent report the WHO has said that because of the cleanliness campaign three lakh children were saved. The credit for saving lives of three lakh children goes to every Indian who was a part of this campaign. Saving the lives of three lakh children of the poor is surely a great humanitarian act and the world bodies are recognizing it.

Brothers and Sisters, Mahatma Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary falls next year. Bapu during his lifetime attached greater importance to cleanliness than even to freedom. He used to say we got our freedom because of Satyagrahis and Swachhata (cleanliness) will come from Swachhagrahis. Gandhiji trained Satyagrahis and this inspired us to prepare Swachhagrahis. In the coming days, when we will be celebrating his 150th Birth Anniversary, crores of Swachhagrahis will offer Karyanjali (offerings of work) in the memory of Bapu. In a way, they will fulfil his dreams which we are realizing now.

My Brothers and Sisters, it is true that because of cleanliness, lives of three

lakh children have been saved. But no matter how happy a middle class family is and how well-to-do it is or how poor it is, once a family member falls sick, the whole family suffers. On occasions generations are afflicted with illnesses.

The Government of India has decided to launch Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Abhiyan so that the poor man, the common man gets free treatment for serious diseases and he can be admitted to big hospitals free of cost. The Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Abhiyan and Ayushman Bharat Yojana will cover 10 crore families of the country. In the coming days, the people from lower middle class, middle class and upper middle class income groups can also access health care services from these two programs. There is a provision of giving five lakh rupees per annum health assurance for each family. It means about fifty crore citizens belonging to ten crore families will benefit. We are going to give this benefit to our countrymen. This is a technology driven system which is transparent. As such, an ordinary citizen will not face any difficulty as technology technological tools have been built for this purpose.

Over the next four, five, six weeks from today, this technology will be tested across the country to make it fool proof. On the 25th of September, the birth anniversary of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Abhiyan will be launched throughout the country. No poor person of the country will have to face difficulty in dealing with diseases. Nor he would have to borrow money from a moneylender paying interest. His family will not be destroyed. And it will also open new avenues of employment for the youth, for the middle class families in the health sector. New hospitals will be built in the tier-2 and tier-3 cities. They will require medical staff in large numbers. A lot of employment opportunities will also be generated.

Brothers and sisters, no poor person wants to lead a life of penury. No poor person wants to die poor. No poor person wants to pass on his poverty as

a legacy to his children. Throughout his life, he struggles to come out of poverty. There is only one way to end this problem- through the empowerment of poor people.

In the last four years, we have laid emphasis on empowerment of poor people. It has been our endeavour to empower the poor people. An international organization has released a very good report in the recent past. According to the report, five crore poor people in India have crossed the Poverty Line in the last two years.

Brothers and sisters, when we carry out the work for the empowerment of poor people; and when I talked about Ayushman Bharat Program, then very few people realized the massive size of the scheme, – 10 crore families or a population of 50 crore people, very few people were able to grasp what it means. If I combine the population of America (USA), Canada and Mexico, then the number of beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat Program will be nearly the same. If I take into account the population of entire Europe, then nearly the same number of people are going to get the benefits of this Ayushman Bharat scheme in India.

Brothers and sisters, we have formulated several schemes for empowerment of the poor. Although many schemes have been formulated in the past, middlemen, the people who take cuts, used to take away the cream of the scheme. The poor people didn't get what rightfully belonged to them. Money was being paid from the exchequer, the schemes existed on paper, and the country continued to be robbed. The Government cannot keep its eyes shut. And, at least I can never keep my eyes shut to this kind of thing.

Brothers and sisters, therefore it is extremely essential to create confidence in the minds of the common man by eliminating the deformities in our system. And whether it is the state governments or the centre or whether these are the local bodies of self-rule, we all have to work together. And we

will have to take it forward. You will be surprised to know that since the time we have been engaged in this campaign for cleansing the system, and plugging leakages; there were six crore bogus beneficiaries who had never been born, who never existed on the earth but the money was being sent in their names - somebody was the beneficiary of Ujjwala Scheme, some beneficiary of the gas connection scheme with a duplicate gas connection; somebody was taking benefits through bogus ration cards; somebody was the beneficiary of scholarship scheme; someone else was the beneficiary of pension scheme. How difficult it would have been to remove these six crore names! How many people would have faced problems because of this ! The person who was never born, the person who doesn't exist anywhere on the earth, but the money was pilfered on his name by using bogus names.

This government has put an end to it. We have taken steps in the direction of curbing corruption and putting an end to the entire system of black money.

Brothers and sisters, what are the consequences of it? Rs.90,000 crores is not a small amount. Almost Rs.90,000 crores, which used to go into the hands of wrong people for wrong activities, is now in the nation's treasury, now being used for the welfare of common man.

Brothers and sisters, why does it happen? Our country works for the pride and honour of the poor people, but what do these middlemen do? You must be aware of the fact that wheat is sold at Rs. 24-25 (per kilo) in the market, but the government provides it to the poor at only Rs.2 on ration card after buying it at Rs.24-25. Similarly, rice which is sold at Rs.30-32 in the market is purchased by the Government at this rate and provided to the poor at Rs.3 on ration cards. This means if anyone steals 1 kg of wheat on a bogus ration card, he automatically gains Rs.20-25. If gets rice in this manner, he will get Rs 30-35. That's why this entire business of bogus names and IDs had been going on. When a poor person used to approach

the shop with his ration card and request grain, the shopkeeper would say that the stock was over. That grain then used to be diverted to another shop and the poor had to purchase the grain of Rs.2 from the other shop at Rs.20-25. The right of the poor used to be snatched away. Therefore, this bogus system has now been uprooted.

Brothers and sisters, crores of poor people in our country get food at Rs.2 and Rs.3. The government is spending generously for the same but the credit does not go to the government. Today I want to specifically tell the honest taxpayers that when you have your food with your family, for a moment kindly ponder over what I am about to say. I want to touch the hearts of the honest taxpayers. I want to salute them. I want to reassure the honest taxpayers that all the schemes that are in operation are run by your money. The honest tax payers gain good fortune because the poor get to eat from the taxpayers' money. Therefore, it is the result of your honest paying of taxes when you have your meal with your family, 3 poor families are also able to have their meals at the same time.

Friends, an atmosphere of non-payment of taxes was being created. However, when a person, even if he is in an AC room, comes to know that 3 poor families are being served with his tax money, it is highly satisfying for his soul. This is the most virtuous task for a person. Brothers and sisters, today, the country is moving ahead celebrating the festival of honesty. Till 2013, i.e. for the last 70 years, there were 4 crore people who were paying direct taxes. However brothers and sisters, today this figure has increased to almost 6.75 crore. Look how far we have come from 3, 3.5 or 3.75 crore to 6.75 crore. Are not these glaring figures a true reflection of honesty? This is an example that nation is treading the path of honesty. In the past 70 years, 70 lakh enterprises were included in the Indirect tax net. However, in the last one year alone, after the introduction of GST, the figure has catapulted to one crore and 16 lakh. Brothers and sisters, today everyone in the country is participating in celebrating the festival of honesty. I salute all those who are embracing transparency and honesty. I

wish to reassure those who want to step forward. You are making a contribution in the nation's progress. Your problems are our concerns. We stand with you, for we have to take the nation forward through everyone's contribution. Therefore, we will not tolerate black money and corruption. Come what may, we shall not retract from the path of honesty, as we all have seen how they have corroded and ruined the nation. Thus, you would have seen that power-brokers are not to be seen in the power corridors of Delhi.

Dear countrymen, times have changed. Some people sitting in their drawing rooms used to claim that they will change the policies of the government, or influence in them in a negative way have been silenced. Our doors are closed to them.

Dear countrymen, we have rooted out nepotism and affiliations. We have strongly condemned favoritism and bias. Strong action is being taken against corrupt officers. More than three lakh dubious companies have been closed down, and restrictions have been imposed on their directors. Today, we have introduced IT interventions for online transactions to ensure transparency. There was a time when seeking an environmental clearance meant facing rampant corruption. We have made the process transparent and online. Any person can access it. We can work in a way that the nation's resources are utilized judiciously. It is also a matter of immense pride for women of the country that today we have three women judges in the Supreme Court providing justice to the nation. This is the first time after independence that the Union Cabinet has the maximum representation of women ministers.

Dear Countrymen, today I wish to share some wonderful news with my brave daughters. On this occasion, I declare with pride the grant of Permanent Commission for the appointment of women officers in Short Service Commission of Indian Armed Forces. The process will be transparent and similar to the selection process of male officers. This is a

gift from my side from the ramparts of the Red Fort, to the daughters who are in uniformed services and have dedicated their lives to the nation. The nation salutes the patriotic fervor and national commitment displayed by young girls who are our national pride. Women are equally contributing in building a strong India. The nation is experiencing the pride, contribution and potential of our mothers and sisters.

From agricultural fields to the sports arena, our women are holding the Indian Tricolor high. From Sarpanch to the Parliament, our women are contributing to the development of the country. From schools to armed forces everywhere the women of our country are marching ahead. But while our women are valiantly moving ahead in such large numbers, we also come across gruesome ugliness. We sometimes see demonic forces posing challenges to women's power. Rape is painful, and we, the countrymen, the people should feel many times more pain than the pain borne by the victim. Brothers and sisters, we have to free this society from this demonic mentality. The law is taking its own course. Recently, rapists in a case from Katni in Madhya Pradesh were sentenced to death after just five days of trial. Similarly, in Rajasthan, rapists were sentenced to death after a few days of trial. More such news gets published, the more such people with demonic mentality will get scared. We have to publicize such news. People should know that rapists are being sent to the gallows. There is a need to beat this mentality; there is a need to curb this thinking, and there is a need to stop this aberration. Brothers and sisters, this mentality breeds unpardonable crimes. Rule of law is supreme for us and there cannot be any compromise on that. Nobody can be allowed to take law into their own hands. In the family, in schools, colleges, our children of the new generation, our small innocent children should be nurtured in such an environment that they learn appropriate values. They should learn to respect women. They should know that this is the right way to live. We have to instill this feeling and values in our families.

Brothers and sisters, I want to reassure my Muslim sisters. Triple Talaq has spoiled the lives of Muslim daughters of our country. Those who have not faced the Talaq are spending their lives under pressure. We wanted to bring a legislation in this session of Parliament itself to free Muslim women from this evil system. But there are some people who are obstructing the passage of this Bill. But I want to assure my Muslim mothers, sisters and daughters that I will not stop till they get justice. I will fulfill your aspirations.

My beloved countrymen, our army, paramilitary forces, police, intelligence agencies are the source of strength for our country's internal security. They have created a sense of security in us. They have ensured a peaceful environment. A new confidence has been generated because of their sacrifices, dedication and hard work.

Brothers and Sisters, we used to hear about incidents of violence every now and then from the North East, there were reports of insurgency. We used to hear about the incidents of bomb blasts and firing. But today the two states of Meghalaya and Tripura have seen withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) which was in force for three or four decades. This was possible because of efforts of our security forces, because of actions taken by the state Governments, because of development projects executed by the Centre and the state Governments and the efforts to connect people there with the national mainstream. Tripura and Meghalaya are now out of the purview of the Armed Forces Special Power Act. Several districts of Arunachal Pradesh have also been brought out of the purview of the Armed Forces Special Power Act. Now, it is in force only in a few districts.

Left Wing Extremism, Maoism have been bleeding the country. Violent incidents, people fleeing from homes and hiding in forests were a matter of daily occurrence. However, today because of continuous efforts by our security forces, launching of development projects and efforts to connect

the people with national mainstream, left-wing extremism which affected 126 districts has now been reduced to 90 districts. The work on finding a solution to put an end to left wing extremism from those districts is progressing rapidly.

Brothers and Sisters, regarding Jammu & Kashmir, the path shown by Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji is the right one. We want to move ahead on that road. Vajpayeeji said Insaniyat, Jamhuriyat, Kashmiriyat (humanism, democracy, Kasmiriyat)—with these three basic elements we want to develop Jammu & Kashmir. Whether it is Ladakh or Jammu or Srinagar valley. We want balanced development where an ordinary person's aspirations are fulfilled, infrastructure is strengthened; we want to move ahead with brotherhood in our hearts. We do not want to move on the road of bullets and abuses, we want to move ahead with love and affection with the Kashmiri people who have stood with us in patriotic fervor.

Brothers and Sisters, irrigation schemes are progressing. The work of building IIT, IIM and AIIMS is speedily going on. The work of reclamation of Dal Lake is also going on. The biggest thing is that during the past one year village headmen from Jammu and Kashmir in large numbers have been meeting me with the request to hold Panchayat elections there. The elections could not be held for some reason or the other. I am happy that the villagers of Jammu and Kashmir will have this opportunity in the coming months. A system in which villagers will be able to look after their villages will be in place soon. Now, the Government of India gives huge funds which go directly to the villages and this will help the village headmen to take their villages on the path of development. That is why we are moving forward in the direction of holding Panchayat elections and election to City Councils.

Brothers and Sisters, we have to take the country to new heights. Our motto is "Sab Ka Saath Sab Ka Vikaas". There is no discrimination based on yours or mine and no nepotism. And that is why we are going ahead

with this aim and today standing under this tricolour, once again I want to reiterate the resolve for which we are ready to sacrifice ourselves.

Let every Indian have a house of his own - Housing for All. Every house should have electricity connection, power for all. Every Indian should be free from smoke in kitchen and that is why there is the scheme for Cooking Gas for All. Every Indian should have enough water to meet his needs and that is why there is the scheme for Water for All. Every Indian should have toilets and therefore Sanitation for All. Every Indian should be skilled, so Skill for All. Every Indian should get good and affordable health services, so Health for All. Every Indian should feel safe, every Indian should be insured, hence 'Insurance for All'. Every Indian should get internet services so, Connectivity for All; we want to take the country forward by following this mantra.

My dear brothers and sisters, people tell many things about me too and whatever may be said, I would like to publicly admit certain things today. I am impatient as several countries have gone ahead of us, I am restless and impatient to take my country ahead of all these countries.

My dear countrymen, I am worked up and I am restless because malnutrition has been a major hurdle in the development of the children of our country. It remains a huge bottleneck. I am restless to rid my country of malnutrition.

My countrymen, I am agitated so that a poor person can get an appropriate health cover. I am restless so that an ordinary citizen of my country can combat diseases and remain healthy.

Brothers and sisters, I am restless, I am restless to ensure that our citizens can have a quality life, so that they can have the opportunity to live with ease and so that there may be an all-round improvement.

My dear countrymen, I am restless, I am agitated and I am also impatient for my country to lead the fourth industrial revolution, the revolution that is based on knowledge, the revolution which will be led by those who have IT skills. I am impatient for my country to lead it.

My dear countrymen, I am restless because I want that my country should take maximum advantage of its capabilities and resources and we can move forward in the world with a sense of pride.

My dear countrymen, we want to move ahead. We cannot accept stagnation, we cannot be standstill and it is not in our nature to bend before anybody. This country will neither come to a standstill, neither will it bend and nor will it get tired. We have to achieve greater heights, we have to keep moving ahead.

Brothers and sisters, we are the inheritors of the rich heritage of our ancient legacy of Vedas. And that legacy is due to our self-confidence, and we want to carry forward the legacy.

My dear countrymen, we don't want to only dream about the future, but aspire to scale new heights in the future. We want to move forward with the dream of being at the top. And that is why my dear countrymen, I want to instill a new hope, a new zeal and a new belief (in you) because the country can achieve its dreams with it. And that is why my dear countrymen...

अपने मन में एक लक्ष्य लिए,

अपने मन में एक लक्ष्य लिए,

मंजिल अपनी प्रत्यक्ष लिए,

अपने मन में एक लक्ष्य लिए,

मंजिल अपनी प्रत्यक्ष लिए हम तोड़ रहे हैं जंजीरें,

हम तोड़ रहे हैं जंजीरें,

हम बदल रहे हैं तस्वीरें,

ये नवयुग है, ये नवयुग है,

ये नवभारत है, ये नवयुग है,

ये नवभारत है।

“खुद लिखेंगे अपनी तकदीर, हम बदल रहे हैं तस्वीर,

खुद लिखेंगे अपनी तकदीर, ये नवयुग है, नवभारत है,

हम निकल पड़े हैं, हम निकल पड़े हैं प्रण करके,

हम निकल पड़े हैं प्रण करके, अपना तनमन अर्पण करके,

अपना तनमन अर्पण करके, ज़िद है, ज़िद है, ज़िद है,

एक सूर्य उगाना है, ज़िद है एक सूर्य उगाना है,

अम्बर से ऊंचा जाना है, अम्बर से ऊंचा जाना है,

एक भारत नया बनाना है, एक भारत नया बनाना है।।”

My dear brothers and sisters,

Once again on the sacred occasion of independence, I offer my best wishes. Come, let's say aloud the Mantra of 'Jai Hind'!

Jai Hind! Jai Hind! Jai Hind!

Bharat Mata ki Jai!

Bharat Mata ki Jai!

Bharat Mata ki Jai!

Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram! Vande Mataram!