

Sisters and brothers, this is the third anniversary of the independence of India. I congratulate you on this auspicious occasion. We have come a long way during these three years. We have stumbled and fallen but have picked ourselves up and gone on. I congratulate you for everything that has happened, good and bad, during these years. Why do I include the bad? Perhaps that is wrong. But what I mean is that you are to be congratulated for the joys as well as the sorrows that these three years have brought. Nations grow with the joys as well as the sorrows and troubles that come their way. When long years go by without a nation being tested it becomes slack and weak. We have been through gruelling tests during the last three years, and also in the years which preceded independence. We gained independence by passing those tests with flying colours. Now the nation faces even greater challenges and we shall succeed to the extent that we succeed in facing them with courage and confidence. You should accept the good and the bad, happiness and sorrow, as they come. What you must guard against, however, is cowardice, narrow-mindedness and disunity because they weaken the nation and pave the way for its downfall by debilitating its strength to protect its freedom.

We have been able to reach many of our goals in the last three years. On the 26th of January this year, we saw a big dream of ours come true. There are many other dreams which still remain unfulfilled. Within a few months, millions of people will be going to the polls to elect a new government and the new Constitution which we have adopted will bear fruit. In this way, we are inching forward step by step, no doubt with difficulty, bearing many hardships. But we are going ahead anyway.

Look at the world around you and the troubles that other countries are facing. There is once again talk of war. Then you come to India where, in spite of our weaknesses and evils, we are gradually making progress. It is against the backdrop of the world situation that we must try to understand India, bearing in mind where our duty lies at a time when the whole world is in turmoil. We cannot look to others to help us out of our difficulties, for if we did, we would become weak. We fought for our

freedom by relying not on others or on any weapons but on ourselves and our courage and so we succeeded. Similarly, we can overcome the dangers that threaten us only by relying on ourselves. We do not want enmity with anyone. We want to be friends with all nations. But ultimately we have to rely on our own strength.

Freedom of thought and of expression is an essential prerequisite of a free country. People should be free to form different parties and express their political views. Without this freedom a country cannot remain free. But, at the same time you should beware of people who work against our freedom or do something by which that freedom is shaken or weakened. Freedom of thought and expression must prevail but always with the proviso that it does not weaken the country's unity or independence. If that happens, it is a betrayal of the country. People often fail to make this distinction. Freedom does not give the right to anyone to do evil. Freedom of expression does not mean the freedom to abuse others in the street or print obscenities in newspapers. Such things will vitiate our entire life.

Freedom particularly does not mean a right to strike at the roots of that freedom. If someone attempts such a thing, it is obvious that we have to prevent it. There are many people in the country today who have fomented trouble and incited people in the name of freedom and tried to weaken the nation. They have been dealt with, and since India is strong in spite of our weaknesses, we have succeeded and continue to progress. Some people have made a declaration that they would not participate in the Independence Day celebrations. Some others went a step further and said they would obstruct the proceedings. You can imagine the kind of mentality which prompts such thinking and emotions. This has nothing to do with freedom of expression or thought. It is an outright onslaught on India's freedom and, no matter who they are or to which party they belong, we have to fight against them and root them out completely.

What is the meaning of all this? There are people in the country who are always fomenting disunity and trouble in the land. Their constant cry seems to be that the freedom they have is not enough; and so they want to

break up even what they have. This is indeed strange, and indicates stupidity or some strange quirk of emotion. How can anyone behave in this manner when we are living at a crucial time in the history of India and of the world? If we Indians have differences of opinion, we may quarrel among ourselves, but when the question of India arises, it is the duty of all Indians to bury their mutual differences and to remember that our loyalty is to the country. Those who do not accept this are not Indians. They are welcome to go and live elsewhere.

What brought us together in the past was the unity of India despite various diversities of religion, caste, province and region. Now I find that some parties are once again raising their voices in favour of communalism and fostering fissiparous tendencies in the country. They invoke the name of religion for purely political purposes. You can imagine whether communalism and provincialism will weaken the country or strengthen it. People are welcome to hold different views and to give free expression to them. I do not want everyone in India to repeat the same thing like parrots as though they had no power to think for themselves. We have every right to express our views. But no Indian has the right to raise his voice against India's freedom or to do something which weakens her unity. Those who indulge in such things, whether they understand it or not, are traitors. We must understand these fundamental truths for we are living at a delicate moment in history and we cannot progress unless our freedom is secure.

As you know, there are many problems before us. The world is in a strange flux today. War is going on in a part of Asia, and though Korea is a small country, it is a terrible war. Nobody knows how long it will last, whether it will remain limited there or engulf the world. We are making all efforts to end it soon, but our efforts cannot succeed all over the world. Nobody knows what might happen. But we can do one thing at least: if we can set our own house in order and keep the country on an even keel, give her a proper direction, we can keep India safe even if there is a world conflagration. We can even help to save the world if we have the strength and the spirit and if we are united.

Many problems are before us today, the biggest being that of food. Everyone needs to eat. We have made tremendous efforts during the last two to three years to solve this problem. As you know, there is food shortage even now in Madras, Bihar and some other States. The reports that come in are heart-rending. The situation is still pretty serious. But it has been blown out of all proportion and that is even more serious.

So our first priority is to solve the food problem. Due to various reasons enough food is not produced in India. Many factors are responsible for that: the war, partition with the creation of Pakistan, large food-producing areas have been lost to us and our population has increased. A country, particularly a large country like ours which does not produce enough food, becomes dependent on others. We have to spend enormous amounts of foreign exchange on importing food. But the most important thing is that it weakens us and leaves us vulnerable to outside pressures which may threaten our freedom.

If, unfortunately, there is a world war, we would not be able to import foodgrains at all. How will we manage then? It is obvious that we have to become self-sufficient in food. Secondly, we must change our food habits. If a certain type of food is available, we should be ready to eat it. We must learn to eat whatever is available, particularly if import of foodgrains becomes impossible. We must try to produce enough foodgrains in the country. We must not waste even the smallest quantity of food. We have been thinking of ways and means of doing so. I want you to understand that we will stick to what we said about stopping all import of foodgrains and becoming self-sufficient in two years. Even if there are some shortages, we shall have to put up with that. This is our policy and programme and we will stick to it despite difficulties.

You will find that the situation on the food front is rather strange. On the one hand, there is no doubt that we are succeeding in our drive to produce more food and we shall grow more in the next year or two. But at the same time, we have had natural calamities like floods and drought in certain areas such as Madras, Bihar and Saurashtra. We do not have

enough food stocks in the country to tide us over these crises. Even so we have sent supplies to the worst affected areas. There may be problems in supplying foodgrains to all the villages. But there is sufficient food in every State for the next two or three months. So there is no cause for alarm. It is true that any problem of this kind is a sign of inefficiency in our administration either in the States or at the Centre. I accept that. We must not try to evade our responsibility but learn a lesson.

The other thing, which is more serious, is that there are many people in India who have no scruples in making profits out of other people's distress. Traders and shopkeepers hoard foodgrains in order to make a profit later. I cannot understand this mentality which prompts people to cash in on adversity. How can we tolerate that? You will say that all this is mere talk and that Jawaharlal had said three years ago that black marketeers would be severely punished, but that nothing has been done. You would be justified in saying this. I am myself ashamed that we should have become so callous as to allow black marketeers to flourish. It happens openly in Delhi and we seem helpless to do anything about it. Why should anyone tolerate some people taking advantage of a shortage to make money, and becoming millionaires, without caring whether some other people are dying? It is obvious that the first duty of the Government is to deal with this. But no matter how many laws a government may pass, they cannot be effective unless the people help and cooperate with the government. If all of us make up our minds to put an end to black marketing and hoarding we can do it; and those who persist in these activities will be severely punished.

You may have read in the newspapers that a Bill was moved in Parliament a few days ago and only last evening a law has been passed to put an end to these activities. The law will be implemented within a few days and we shall take action to curb inflation. The Central Government has assumed some powers to deal with the matter even at the State level in order to ensure uniform action throughout the country. But, as I said, we need your help because it cannot be implemented without the help and

cooperation of the people. Your complaint that the officials do not discharge their duties well and sometimes take bribes may be justified. We must correct such mistakes and remove the guilty officials.

There is another problem before us which concerns the whole of India and particularly the city of Delhi. This is the refugee problem. We have made an effort to gradually solve this problem. But it is regrettable that innumerable people are still in camps, braving the vagaries of weather - first the heat of the summer and now the rains. Time is passing, but the problem remains unsolved. I would, however, like to point out that it is not possible for the Government to solve this problem on their own. We need the help of the people, particularly the refugees. It is almost impossible for the Government to solve every problem. We have succeeded to some extent here. But the problem has assumed terrible proportions in Bengal. As you know, we reached an Agreement with Pakistan four months ago which has generated much discussion. Some people seem to think that we have made a mistake. But that is irrelevant, if we are determined to solve the problem, we can succeed. I do not want to go into the details just now, but I want to tell you honestly and sincerely that though the problem of the Bengali refugees is extremely complicated and troublesome, in my view, it is being gradually solved. I cannot make any promises about what happens in the future. That depends on the strength or weakness of the people. But I am not prepared to accept, even for a minute, that the situation is hopeless or that any steps should be taken which, instead of improving the situation, will only bring ruin and hardship to Bengal and the rest of India.

Behind all such problems as food shortage and the rehabilitation of refugees lies the real problem of the economic development of India. How are we to bring that about? It can be done only through cooperation between the Government and the people. Neither the Government nor the people can do it on their own. You have every right to point out the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Government, to criticize them, and also to change the Government any time that you choose. But in criticizing the Government or objecting to their policies, you must not do anything

which weakens India. You must be careful because very often people forget this. Governments and people come and go. Our time will also gradually come to an end. As I told you, we are soon going to have general elections. In any case, we will not be in power for ever. But so long as we have the responsibility of administering the country, we cannot show any weakness. We must work hard and to the best of our ability, mental and physical, so long as we are in charge, whether the danger is external or internal.

I would like to repeat on this anniversary of India's independence that though India is free, freedom brings in its wake its own responsibilities, not only for the Government but for every single individual who enjoys that freedom. If you do not understand and accept those responsibilities, it shows that you have not understood the true meaning of freedom and if ever that freedom is threatened, you will not be able to defend and protect it. If there is an external attack upon India, our armed services, the army, the navy and the air force, in which some of our best young men work, will no doubt fight and repel it. But, ultimately, it is not the armed forces which save a country; it is the men and women in the country who do so and unless every single individual in India considers himself or herself as India's soldier, the country cannot remain safe. When we were fighting for freedom, we did not wear any uniform and yet we regarded ourselves as soldiers in the cause of freedom and faced the British empire fearlessly. People in other countries were amazed at what we dared to do -- a motley rabble of weak and unarmed human beings challenging the might of a great imperial power! But the strange thing is that at that time, there was no fear in our hearts. We had learnt the lesson of fearlessness from that great leader of ours, and so we went ahead boldly as soldiers of India's freedom. We must create that atmosphere once again and learn to be completely fearless.

We must remember these fundamentals on the anniversary of India's independence and avoid petty quarrels. The unity of India is of fundamental importance. India can become strong and can progress only when there is

complete equality for everyone, irrespective of religion, caste and province. All doors of opportunity are open to everyone, and all the citizens of the country are equal shareholders in freedom. If there is disunity and people fight with each other, believe me, we shall weaken ourselves and the country's freedom. The only course open to us is to forge ahead and face the problems which confront us, whether it is of food shortage or something else, squarely and without fear or panic in our hearts. A man who is afraid is useless and unfit for anything. When the problems are bigger, we have to face them with greater fortitude instead of giving in to panic or running away in fear.

So I greet you once again on the third anniversary of our independence. I hope that in the coming year we shall face our problems with courage and determination, rather welcome them, and solve and overcome them. Jai Hind.