

Brothers, sisters and friends, greetings on the anniversary of Independence of new India. It has been seven years since this new India was born, seven years since we became free. We celebrate this anniversary every year under the ramparts of Red Fort because on this day, for all of us, the hundreds and thousands of us in India, life took a new turn and a fresh chapter of Indian history began. Now in these seven years, what has the young, seven-year old India achieved? How has it progressed? Which way is it headed? Where will it go? These are big questions before us. If you search your hearts, you will see that there is a new life in India and a new confidence in itself, and a wave of electric excitement has spread through the hundreds and lakhs of villages in India. The sleeping millions have awakened, and other people, who are continuing to do their old jobs, have turned in a new direction with their bodies, hearts and minds. So this is the atmosphere in India today, I know and you know that we face many difficulties and many of our brethren are in dire straits. But all of us know that you and I are travelling on a new road together.

It was seven years ago that we became independent but what is the meaning of that independence? It is not the ultimate goal of our journey. We cannot sit back just because we have become independent. Our journey has not ended because we have achieved Independence. That is merely the first step in a country's journey towards progress. Independence for a country is never a completion, it has to be carried forward. A nation which is alive never stops, it has to go forward. Our country became fully independent politically, though there are one or two pockets still to achieve freedom. But India is quite determined that they will do so. Whatever India decides to do, her millions will definitely accomplish it.

When I say that we cannot stop with India's Independence, what does it mean? It means that Independence does not imply mere political independence. Independence and freedom have other meanings too. There is social freedom, economic freedom to achieve. If there is poverty in a country, freedom does not reach the people. Those who are caught in the

net of poverty cannot really be free. We have to free them. Similarly, if we are divided by inner quarrels and factions and build up walls of hatred instead of living in harmony and amity, then, too, we cannot really be considered free.

If India is to be really free, we have to do many things. We have to eradicate unemployment and poverty. Please remember that those walls which have been built up in the name of religion, caste and province and which create tensions, show that our minds and hearts are not truly free, however much the outer form may have changed. It also shows our narrow-mindedness. If there is even one village in India where an Indian -- to whatever caste he may belong, let us say, a Harijan, an untouchable -- faces restrictions on living and eating, drinking, etc, that village is not free; it is actually in bondage. We have to free every single person in this country. The freedom of a country does not mean the well-being of a few, a country's freedom has to be seen from the point of view of the common man's living conditions, his difficulties and the opportunities of progress available to him.

So we are still on the road to Independence. Please do not think we have reached our goal. That goal is ahead of us because we are a strong and dynamic nation, set on the path of progress. We will progress. The world has to progress. In recent years, changes have come about in our country, we have been reborn. Similarly, revolutionary changes are taking place all over the world. There are various kinds of disparities and all sorts of changes are continually taking place. In these years, all manners of events have been taking place in this great continent of Asia. For hundreds of years, it had been dominated by foreign powers. Foreign domination has come to an end in some places but, to some extent, it still remains. Compare this with what happened in India and Burma. Seven years ago, India and Burma became independent and these issues were solved in a friendly way when the foreign power went away from here. We had no enmity either with the British or with their army or their people. Our fight was with the British rule in India. When that was removed, we no longer

had any quarrel with them. In fact we became friends. Foreign rule existed in many other countries of Asia and elsewhere. But they did not take this sensible step. What was the result? Seven years of fighting, seven years of ruination of hundreds of thousands of people. Nations were ruined, in Asia and in Europe, and the world reached the brink of a large-scale war. So you can see what evils can result if the natural flow of events is stopped. This did not happen in India because good sense prevailed. What was inevitable was accepted here and so India has progressed and so has the world. Burma became independent and helped towards world peace. There was delay and obstruction in other countries. Please remember that in Indonesia too, foreign rule was removed but after much fighting. Look at the difficulties the foreign powers had to face wherever they forcibly stayed on. The reason is that the time has gone when one country can hope to rule over another by force. For good or for bad, it has passed. Those who want to hold on to it understand neither the world nor the Asian mind.

Some of the questions which are arising before us today are actually old ones. One of these concerns small bits of territories of India, the size of a few villages, which are still under political domination. But even a small splinter in the body gives a great deal of pain. This problem should have been solved a long time ago. But we adopted peaceful methods. We tried to solve the problem by negotiations. I feel that the problem relating to French possessions will be solved soon. Some difficulties have arisen in the case of Portuguese possessions. But assuredly these problems will also be solved. As you all know, we have to continue to follow certain principles, which we adopted in order to achieve Independence. And you must remember that that is how we have maintained our Independence. As you know, we must work together according to the principles of non-violence. I do not say that I or you have succeeded fully in following these principles always. We are all weak, we falter and may fall. We can never follow that path successfully all the time. But we have to remember that, as a principle, it is very sound and our country will gain in stature and strength to the extent we succeed in working in accordance with these principles courageously and bravely and not like cowards. We shall also

succeed to that extent in serving our people and the cause of world peace.

We have tried to experiment with this principle on the world stage because now that we are independent, whether we like it or not, we Indians are going to have a role to play in world affairs. The eyes of the world are on us. India is an ancient country, which has seen many ups and downs and which has been a slave country for the last two or three hundred years. After all, what has the country learnt from its 200 or 250 years of bondage? What will she do now? Which way will she lean? Because when nearly four hundred million lean one way, it is bound to have some effect on the world. After all, we are about one fifth of the world population. So the world looks at us and we have tried to serve the world. The first service that we can do to the world is to pull ourselves together, serve our country and make her strong and rich. The second thing that we can do for the world is to throw our weight on the side of peace and try to stop wars from taking place. It is obvious that ours is not a mighty country, militarily strong. There are many powers in the world which have great armies, air forces and unlimited wealth. How can we hope to compete with them? We are newcomers in the field. We have to put our own house in order. So what can we do? But we represent a principle, an effort, and behind that is the guiding spirit of a great man, Mahatma Gandhi. We have learned to walk with faltering steps on that path. Sometimes we stumbled and fell. But we kept going, keeping that principle, that ideal, before us and we have tried to introduce it to the world without waging a war with any country.

As you know, less than four years ago, some countries which were at war among themselves and would not sit down to talk things over peacefully, suddenly thought of India as a mediator. Both sides put their faith in India. Our forces went out as they had done quite often in olden times too but this time on a different mission. Then they used to go and fight with other countries. But, now, that time is past. We do not wish to fight with anyone under any circumstances. We shall not fight unless we are compelled to. Our forces went out but not to fight. They went out under the banner of our beautiful flag in the name of peace to serve others. They

went to Korea. Then, as you know, we received yet another invitation from the big powers to mediate in Indo-China. Again, we have accepted it, though it is a very big task and a great burden involving a lot of difficulties. But we could not refuse because it was an opportunity to work for world peace. So we accepted. We are represented by our ambassadors there just now. Besides us, there are two other countries on the Commission, namely, Canada and Poland. All three of us will work together. Our people have gone there and accepted the mantle of peace. We may have to send more people soon for this task — some from the army and others. It is a big task. So you can see how India is making a name for herself in the world by working for peace and friendship, and not for destruction and war. I know that India and Indians have always been known for friendship and peace and love.

We may make a name for ourselves in the world. But what should we do at home? Our strength or weakness depends on our conduct at home. If we follow these principles at home, then we shall be honoured in the world. And if we do not, all our talk is in vain. So we have to apply at home the principles of mutual cooperation and friendship. We have to work together even if there are hundreds of religious beliefs. If anyone belonging to a particular religion thinks that he has an exclusive right over India and no one else, we shall disown him. It would mean that he has failed to understand the principle on which Indian nationalism and Indian Independence are based. In fact, in a sense, he becomes an enemy of our Independence. He deals a blow to our Independence, which will be shattered because the basis of India's Independence is secularism. People belonging to different religious sects and castes of India have to live together in amity. They should respect one another and show consideration for others. We have different castes thinking of themselves as higher or lower than others in our country—which has created many barriers and tensions, and given us a bad name and weakened us. We have to combat this casteism until we succeed in eradicating it completely from our country. We can give no quarter to it. What it did in the olden times was deplorable. There is no longer any place for it in modern times. And whoever regards it

with the slightest sympathy or acquiescence, is a coward, and he does not understand the message that India is trying to convey. The message of India today is that everyone in India is politically equal and has to become socially equal and, as far as possible, economically equal as well. All this disparity, whether it be of wealth or of social standing, is not good. Only in this way can we serve our country, make it strong and carry it forward on the road to progress, and, thus, armed with a new strength, we can serve the world too.

We shall make a new India. A new India is, in fact, being created. You have seen how the work put in in the last few years has slowly taken effect this year. You have seen how our food problem has been solved — the prices of foodgrains have gone down and production has increased. As you have also seen, production in factories is increasing. Ultimately, if the poverty in India is to be eradicated, it can only be done by increasing production. Wealth does not mean gold or silver. They are for only traders and businessmen to play about with. The wealth of a country is what it produces from land, from factories and cottage industries — in short, through human labour. We have to produce that kind of wealth. As we have produced more from land, we have been able to solve the problem of food. The factories are increasing their production and new factories will be coming up. And you might have seen that the big river valley projects like Bhakra-Nangal are nearing completion, and the people will now benefit from them. In this way, 36 crore people are going ahead. If you go to the villages, you will see all kinds of projects going on and we have to spread them throughout India. It has been decided to spread them among a few million people every year. Our aim is that every village in India should come under this scheme within the next seven years. There are six hundred thousand villages in India. So our goal is not a small one. And our country is not a small one. We have to take big steps, undertake great tasks, win big victories. But our victories will not be over others, neither do we wish to suppress anyone. Our victories will mean the victory of others too. This is India's policy internally and in our external affairs too.

Why is it that India is today among the very few countries whose doors are open to everyone? We invite the people of all countries to come here. We have no enmity with anyone. Our brothers in Pakistan are often angry and unhappy with us. All sorts of problems came between us. But, as I have repeatedly said, we harbour no thoughts of war. We want to love them and cooperate with them, because we understand that such close neighbours as India and Pakistan should live in amity with each other. Neither benefits from losses suffered by the other. We should move with this approach. That does not mean that we should give up our principles or let our prestige suffer out of fear. We have to stand firmly by our principles and remember that we are pursuing the path of peace, not of war.

I referred to you just now to the areas which are in India but have still not got Independence. Goa is one of them. Even there, our policy has been one of peace. But I would like to tell you that Goa is a test for us and you can say it is a test for the Portuguese, though it is difficult for a nation which speaks with a language three or four hundred years old to realize this. Whether it is a test for the Portuguese or ourselves, it is certainly a trial for the whole world. I want you to understand this. In a sense, I would say it has become a testing ground to see which side the nations of the world lean when it is a question of one country ruling over another that is, of colonialism, or whatever you may call it. Goa cannot radically change India's fortunes by becoming part of her, nor will Portugal be enriched by retaining Goa. But it is like the scar of an old boil, of one country ruling over another. How can any one say that it is an old boil and so we must put up with the pain? They do not understand our mind or that of Asia. And so this is a trial for the other countries. We do not want any country to intervene in the solution of the problem or extend help in this matter. But we want to probe their minds to see what they are thinking, which way they are leaning and what their advice would be, though it is a strange way of measuring things. Their minds are old-fashioned. Today's world is a new world. If the light from the new world does not penetrate their minds and they continue to be old-fashioned, then they will definitely fall once again. I gave you an example just now of how the world has gained by the fact that India

achieved Independence and is progressing. But Independence has yet to be realized in many other parts of Asia. Fighting has been going on for years, bringing ruin in its wake. The world is moving at a fast pace. How can anyone hope to arrest big floods? And if it is a human flood, an attempt to control it can only have disastrous consequences. So I feel that Goa is also a test of the other countries of the world. If they give wrong advice, the situation worsens. If they adopt the right course, problems can be solved in a peaceful way.

I would like to remind you once again that India has embarked on a long journey. People belonging to various castes and religions, like Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Jains, are all Indians and, in that capacity, they keep marching ahead, and the country also progresses.

How does a nation become affluent and emerge out of its poverty? By hard work. We cannot look to the stars to help us — we do not want their help. We do not want anyone's help. We have strength in our shoulders and our minds. We shall progress by working together in peace and harmony. So I invite you on this anniversary, yours and mine, of our Independence for, when a country becomes independent, each one of its citizens becomes independent and so your anniversary and mine — the eighth anniversary of the Independence of new India, to participate in this long journey, so that we can work hard with our full strength and uplift the towns and villages of India. Jai Hind.