

Sisters, brothers and children, it is the fourteenth anniversary of independent India. I congratulate everyone on this auspicious day. On this day ideas and memories come crowding into the mind. First of all, there is the memory of Gandhiji who led us towards freedom. We must not only think of him but of the lesson that he taught us and the path shown by him. If we stay away from that path, we will come to grief as we have done in the past. Let us think of him and the millions of martyrs who toiled for India's freedom, bore untold hardships and in some instances, gave up their lives.

Then we must look back over the fourteen years which have gone by and take stock of our achievements and failures, our progress and the things that need to be done. We must look to the past because we learn from our experience. But ultimately our sight should be on the future because it is the millions of Indians who are responsible for moulding that future. It is not fate, for it is we ourselves who make or mar our fate by our actions. Therefore, we must think of the future. The people of India have come a long way and overcome great obstacles. But the future is full of more obstacles and the goals that we have set our eyes on are far away. Yet the years gone by give us confidence and strength for we have crossed many milestones. Each of the Five Year Plans has been a great step and now we are about to start the Third Plan. We hope that by the end of the Third Plan India would have progressed a great deal and become stronger and more prosperous. It is the foremost duty of every nation to protect its freedom. Unfortunately danger threatens on our borders and so we must be constantly vigilant.

Only yesterday, a small incident occurred and a small piece of Indian territory consisting of a few villages which had been separated from India for a long time, have once again been merged into India. They are Dadra and Nagar Haveli. It is a small piece of territory and yet the smallest piece of India's territory is dear to our hearts and so we are extremely happy that it has come back to us. It also reminded us of the other small pieces of territory here and there which need to be merged into India once again.

It is not our policy, and nor do we wish to launch an attack on any

other country or capture their territory. These are outdated notions. We have no desire to attack anyone or to interfere in their affairs, nor will we tolerate an attack on our country. Gone are the days of territorial conquest and empire building. This is a new age in which territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations is sacred. This is the age of cooperation between nations. Those who violate these principles do not belong in this age.

You must try to understand the age in which we are living today. Aeroplanes have become very common today. Man is trying to reach the Moon and the stars. At a time like this, how can we barricade ourselves behind our narrow frontiers and indulge in petty squabbles? We are on the threshold of a new frontier, a new age and must prepare ourselves to fit into it. On the one hand many of our young men are already prepared and are trying to participate in the task of building a new world. This is something for us to be proud of. But on this day particularly, I do not wish to boast about our achievements in the last fourteen years of which we can justifiably be proud. It would be better to focus our attention on our weaknesses.

You may have read our Vice-President's message which has been published in the newspapers. He has laid special emphasis on the need for discipline. Our armed forces are extremely disciplined, courageous and inspire confidence. But there must be discipline among the millions in the country because we have to foster the fundamental unity of India which creates an unbreakable bond in spite of the tremendous diversities of language, province, religion, etc., and India's myriad forms. We must remember that we are one large family and any man or woman who does something which hurts that unity or weakens us does harm to India. We must respect our neighbour and his religion and cooperate with everyone in the country. The sad thing is that we often forget this lesson and fight among ourselves in the name of religion, province, caste, language and what not. There can be arguments and debates among the people. But anything which creates disunity and bitterness and barriers is bad, for it poses obstacles in the path we are trying to follow. You must remember

that we have taken up a gigantic task of uplifting crores of human beings, which has perhaps no comparison anywhere in the world. We are trying to go from one age into another, from the old rut and way of living and mire of poverty into a new and prosperous age. Prosperity and progress bring other things in their wake which uplift the mind and the spirit. Love of ease and comfort can take a country nowhere.

People in India have had to face tremendous hardships in the last fourteen years. We have progressed and there has been some relief. There are problems and they will continue to be there and in one sense, we are lucky to have them because a nation which faces no problems and difficulties becomes ease-loving and soft just as the children of rich parents become useless and weak. We do not need such weak people. We want a strong and spirited nation in which there is unity and a bond of affection. If you look at the India of today, you will see a strange picture. Big things are happening all over the country and India is holding her head high once more. Millions of children go to schools and colleges and learn about the new world. They are preparing themselves to serve India and the world in the future. At the same time, there is bitterness and hatred, quarrels over small things, etc.

Our attention is focused at the moment on the Punjab where the people are courageous and have served India well in the past and during the freedom struggle and will undoubtedly do so in the future too. But unfortunately along with their bravery and courage, which have made them famous soldiers, there is great bitterness and internal feud among them in which their energies are frittered away. Similar things are happening in other parts of the country too. Therefore though one of our major problems is to implement the Five Year Plan and march in step, the most urgent problem confronting us today in India is to create unity, a spiritual bond, an emotional integration among the people. Recently, we had a conference of people from the different states to deliberate over this matter and certain decisions were taken. But that was only a step. This is something which we must give first priority. All our progress and industrialisation and prosperity

will be useless if we fight among ourselves and are unable to cooperate with one another. This is of fundamental importance. Therefore I feel sad when such incidents occur in the country and people are perturbed about the trends in the Punjab, I hope that the people will be sensible and nothing untoward will happen. The people of the Punjab are emotional and hotheaded but ultimately capable of understanding. So they will undoubtedly be sensible and soon the mental fog which envelops us and prevents us from seeing clearly will be removed and fresh air and light will prevail in which the present problem will be solved. No problem can be solved by violence and fighting or hunger strike. These are not democratic methods of solving problems, for they create barriers among the people and social chaos will result. We must build a structure of society which is purely Indian and not a Hindu society or a Muslim, Sikh or some other communal society.

Therefore our urgent priority is one of mutual cooperation. There are many religions in the country, some of which came originally from outside. But we must respect all of them for they belong to India and have done so for thousands of years. India has been famous down the ages for her religious tolerance and respect for other ways of life. Emperor Ashoka has had this message engraved on stone more than two thousand years ago. We have slid back from that and fight among ourselves in the name of language, religion, caste and what not. The caste system cannot exist in a democracy. We must get rid of it for it has divided our society in the past. Everyone should be welcome to follow his own religion but that does not mean that there should be religious feuds which weaken the country. We must remember that the greatest dharma in India is unity, cooperation and tolerance and anything which comes in the way of that is wrong, no matter what name it goes by. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and people of all other religions belong to India and enjoy equal rights. They must march forward together. How is that to be achieved if we squabble among ourselves?

As I told you, this is the age when man looks to the Moon and the

stars and soon he will reach them. Those who risk their lives for the country contribute to its greatness. A country cannot progress by sitting still. Money is certainly important but it is human beings who make money and not the other way round. We need human beings and humanism in the country.

Secondly, you will notice that there are constant reverberations of war drums in the world and preparations for war. More and more lethal weapons are being discovered which can destroy the whole world once they are unleashed. In spite of that, the elder statesmen of the world do not have the wisdom to put an end to this mad race for armaments. It is quite obvious that the modern lethal weapons cannot solve the problems of the world—they can only bring destruction and ruin upon it. There is no question of winning or losing in such a war, for the world will become one large graveyard. Anyhow, we must first try to manage our own affairs. What should be our course of action when the world faces such grave dangers? It is obvious that we should continue to follow our own path and try to throw our weight on the side of peace. But how can we hope to have an impact unless we create an atmosphere of peace in our own country? We vitiate the atmosphere by internal squabbles and disunity. How then can we serve the world? Therefore, it is my request to you and through you, to the people of India, that you should understand the age in which we live and the India that we are trying to build. India is trying to cross new frontiers and old weaknesses have no place in that. The important thing is the attitude of the people of India and whether they are in a mental rut or get out of it and try once again to climb new heights of humanism. This is the real problem which confronts India today. The Five Year Plan and other projects are part of this. You must try to understand what we have to do. Nobody can make us do anything if we are engrossed in our petty squabbles or election fever and what not. Elections come and go but a nation goes on and so do its principles. If a nation fails to remain on the rails, winning elections can solve nothing. What we face today is victory or defeat of an entire nation. That is why I request all of you, the people of India and particularly the people of the Punjab, Sikhs as well as the Hindus, to look at this question from this angle and not in a narrow minded, emotional way. Please

remember that wrong means can make even the right goals wrong.

Gandhiji taught us this lesson that wrong means do not lead to the right goals. Therefore I hope that in this historic age of ours the history of India and the world will be written by the actions and hard work of the people as it was done during the freedom struggle. The historians will put it down later. At a time like this, we cannot allow petty issues to lead us astray and forget the larger, more important things. No problem can be solved by bitterness or feuds. This is my request. Let the people of India eschew this path and look to the new shining world before us and take the country towards it.

More than fifty years ago, your elders dreamt of India's freedom which came true. It is seldom that one's dreams come true in one's own lifetime. But in that one moment, we realized that we still had a long way to go. We needed to foster unity in this great land of ours stretching from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, and to make her people broadminded and large-hearted and prosperous once more. It is no small task to try to uplift forty-three crores of human beings and to get rid of the weaknesses and barriers of the past. We want everyone to have equal opportunities. So long as we cherish all our religions, we will progress but communalism is bad because it creates disunity. We must get rid of anything which keeps us apart. I would like to tell you that one good yardstick for measuring any action of ours is to see whether it binds us together or keeps us asunder. Children and grown-ups must understand that the most urgent priority before us today is discipline of the minds and hearts, and anything that militates against it, no matter what garb it dons, is wrong. Please remember that.

There are innumerable children sitting here. They are the future of India for whom we are working today. We have to build a beautiful new world for them and instil into them a sense of India's past greatness and also the need to grasp the new scientific and technological advance which occurred in the world. We must get rid of the weaknesses which create barriers among us and live as one great family.

I give you my greetings on this auspicious, fourteenth anniversary of India's independence. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that our President has not been very well for the last few days and all of us hope that he will become well soon and continue to serve the country as he has done throughout his life. Jai Hind! Please say Jai Hind with me thrice.

Jai Hind! Jai Hind! Jai Hind!