

In our long history, the people of India have passed through many vicissitudes and undergone many sufferings, but today the economic problems influence us all. Thus, while I am happy on our Independence Day anniversary, my heart is also full of sorrow and anxiety. I am aware of the difficulties you are facing. Floods and droughts have further added to the sufferings of the people already burdened with economic difficulties. My sympathies go out to you all.

The most important question today is that of rising prices and scarcity of essential commodities. You are also aware of the circumstances which have brought about this situation. But, this should not lead us to believe that nothing has been achieved during all these years. In one sense, it is the progress that we have made and the crises and challenges that we have faced, which have contributed to our economic difficulties. At a time like this, we should not be debating as to how and why these difficulties have arisen. Instead, we should be thinking of the ways to surmount these problems unitedly. In the past also, the Indian people tackled many a crisis on a war footing and overcame them successfully.

Drought and war have led to shortages of many commodities. There has been good progress in our agricultural production, and you are aware that it has even doubled or tripled. However, in the last four years the rate of growth has not been the same as it was in the previous years. This year, particularly, shortage of fertilisers and quality seeds further added to the difficulties. Even so, the shortages are not unbearable. We may have to modify our habits, change traditional ways and may also have to suffer a bit. Once we accept this, it would not be beyond us to put up with the situation. The most dangerous thing would be to give up hope and to feel that nothing has been done or can be done.

At a time like this, everyone has some responsibility or the other. Of course, the first responsibility lies with the Government and we are not overlooking this factor. You must have observed that for some time past, we have taken stringent steps to reduce Government expenditure. Many programmes, although beneficial to the people, but not considered

essential, have been abandoned. Many things are in short supply and the Government is devoting its attention to reducing their consumption in order to conserve them for essential purposes. It was never our intention to freeze or reduce wages or dearness allowance. All that we want is that a part of it may be set aside and not be spent. The money, so deposited, will also fetch attractive interest. When there is greater spending, the money supply increases and if production is not proportionately increased it leads to serious consequences.

You are all aware of the unavoidable and essential expenditure the Government had to incur on giving relief to the drought-stricken people and on war. On the other hand, there were some other unavoidable items of expenditure which led to further inflation. We are at present engaged in containing inflation, and to some extent we have succeeded. If you would understand the issues involved and extend us your co-operation, we would be able to succeed in greater measure and save the situation.

Our farmers have been giving considerable help. There is often a discussion whether priority should be given to the agriculture or industry. Now, there is no question of differentiating between the two. We have to see that both prosper simultaneously. Our farmers feed the country, and it is only through their toil that this country has survived through the centuries. Therefore, it is natural that they should be given all help so that production increases and the standard of living of villagers goes up. It is their duty to utilise every inch of land for agriculture and it is the duty of us all not to do anything to spoil the fertility of the land.

The demand for chemical fertilisers has gone up, and now there is a shortage of fertilisers. The shortage is not only because production has lessened but because the demand has gone up. Today, even the small farmer wants to use chemical fertilisers, and we are indeed happy that he is prepared to adopt modern technology. But, at the same time, we have to see whether we can utilise alternative sources. Now, even some of the affluent countries of the world are taking to old methods. This is all due to shortages. It is also because they have realised that satisfactory results

can be obtained only through a combination of the old and the new. When the use of chemical fertilisers came into vogue, the farmer saw that production increased through its use and he started using it in increasing quantities. He gave up the use of manures, which he used earlier, for instance, cowdung, green manure and waste. Now, to overcome shortages and also to see that the fertility of the land remains at a high level, it is necessary to use both types of fertilisers side by side.

Similar is the case with shortage of other resources, like power. The Government is trying to increase generation of power through every means. There is shortage of oil and we have undertaken oil exploration. But, still we have to discover alternative sources of energy, which can be harnessed. Here, again, if we look at the West, we find that many of the old methods are once again coming into vogue. This may not be a permanent phenomenon, but it is essential now because we have to tide over the difficult situation. We have also to see how we can harness solar energy and wind power. Today, the discovery should not be confined only to the scientist. Every individual, whether in the village or in the city, has to see what new methods he can discover and put to use for the benefit of society. On the one hand, the farmer has to see that agricultural production goes up; on the other, our industries also have to be developed. If there are no industries, many of our essential commodities cannot be made available and even the farmer will not get his basic necessities. Whatever the farmer needs- quality seeds, tractors or other implements- they are all manufactured in big factories, the establishment of which has cost us crores of rupees. The rich farmers, who have benefited mainly from the new technology, should help to raise the standard of living of the villagers. Greater the awareness in the villages, more the agricultural production and greater the availability of things of comfort and entertainment.

Today, when we increase taxes, who bears the burden? Unfortunately, the big people avoid taxes through some means or the other. Many of their names do not even figure in the income-tax list. All businessmen are not bad, but through the misdeeds of some of them, the

entire community gets a bad name. Those who do not pay taxes or sell adulterated food or medicines or those who hoard and earn black-money are responsible for the misery of our country. This is a blot on India's name. Some people exploit the people's difficulties for their selfish ends without any thought for the future. It is not only a question of the future of others. It is also a question of the future of their own children. So, when so many big people and some of the people of middle classes like contractors, doctors, lawyers and the self-employed do not pay taxes, what happens? The entire burden of taxes falls on those people who are in the fixed income group.

Sometimes, we are accused of imposing a land but are overlooking the city-dwellers. There are so many rich people in the cities. Are we overlooking them? Some measures have been taken. Taxes have been raised and we are trying to see in what ways we can limit wealth. Unless the people share each other's burden, the country will never be able to improve.

Just as the country is dependent on the performance of the farmers, it is also dependent on the production capacity and discipline of the labour and the management of the industries. Only through hard work can we increase the production and only by overcoming the mutual differences can we help our farmers and the entire country. Today, all classes are facing difficulties. In fact, the whole world has always faced one difficulty or the other. We all have to get together and overcome these. I am aware of the fact that in times of great hardships, it is the poor who have to bear greater burden because the rich have greater capacity for absorption and sustenance. Similar is the case with the affluent nations. India may be a poor country and thus the burden may have told upon her, but we also know that Indians have not given up hope in any adverse circumstances. On the contrary, the people have emerged strengthened through all difficulties.

Today, we have to see as to how we can rid the society of its evils. Is it through violence or agitations? Can we remove the evils through fighting against one another? The problems are complex, and we have to get

together and see how we can solve them. Of course, it is the responsibility of the Government, but can't every individual citizen do his bit? Can't our brothers and sisters refrain from buying things, which are not available in the open market, but are available only in the black-market? Can't our other brothers and sisters grow vegetables in pots and cans if they have no land attached to their houses, keep their city clean, and help in eradicating evil practices prevalent in their neighbourhood? Every single citizen, notwithstanding the class he belongs to and his resources, can put in his mite which will not only be in his own interest but in the interest of the nation.

Unfortunately, we are prone to lapsing into complacency when something good comes about. But when there is some difficulty, we all give up hope. Sometimes, it seems that the entire nation has adopted a defeatist attitude. No problem has been solved by giving up hope. I have enumerated some of the problems. There are other problems too. For instance, our population is rising at a tremendous rate and the people of all classes are demanding more of everything. Today, a cycle, a motorcycle, a tractor or a transistor is a common sight in the villages, although nobody could even dream of it only some years back. All this is, of course, good. If we are to raise the living standards of our people, we have to control our increasing population.

We are redoubling our efforts to strengthen our country. We will never relapse into idleness. Recently, we exploded a nuclear device, through which we gained more self-confidence. Some countries criticised us. There were also some misunderstandings and some people utilised this opportunity to denigrate us. But, we have made it clear that whatever energy we have, nuclear or non-nuclear, we will utilise it for the benefit of the people and will co-operate for its development.

In the international field, there have been many incidents and many new forces have come to the fore. India has always tried to maintain friendship with all and, as you are aware, friendship has indeed increased. You must have seen how we entered into agreements with our

neighbouring countries. This we did to lessen tension, and I think we have set an example for the whole world. But all of our neighbours have, in spite of our efforts, not learnt anything from our experience. Some of our neighbouring countries are trying to threaten us even today. We hope that peace will not be disturbed, and all the poor developing countries will be able to devote themselves to the task of social and economic progress, and their attention will not be diverted. But, life is such that no matter how much our internal difficulties, we cannot afford to neglect the external dangers. We have to remain ever vigilant.

Our country has become stronger in the past few years. In our long history, there have been difficulties, and you are aware of the problems we have had to face- of the wars we had to fight and the millions of refugees we had to care for. In spite of this, we kept on with our development activities and we will keep on doing so. I only have to tell you not to be disheartened, and have courage and faith in the country's future and in India's people.

Sometimes, there is discontent and unrest among the youth. This is natural. But, how is this energy to be utilised? Should we dissipate our energies or utilise them for some progressive purpose? The youth require a strong India more than we, and the country also needs energetic young men. Today, we have to dedicate ourselves to the task of tearing asunder the dark curtain and to see the bright future of the country. No country has been able to mould its future without passing through difficulties and dangers. If we are to mould our history, we have to progress rapidly and wean away from all such factors like poverty, disunity, social evils and despair, which weaken a nation.

There are many children in front of me and whenever I see them, my mind is diverted to the other children living in the villages and the cities. What kind of future are we to mould for them? Our age is a link between our glorious past and our bright future. A great responsibility devolves on us. Let us get together to shoulder these responsibilities and to turn into reality the hopes that we nurture for our children. Due to our policies of

peace and friendship, of strengthening India and of bringing about unity and socialism in our country, India has gained respect abroad. It is the responsibility of all of us to see that this prestige increases. India is strong, but not as much as it should be.

India will become strong only when this mist of despair is lifted and when every individual picks up courage. You can give the answer as much as I, whether we can achieve this or not. The future of India depends on each citizen as much as it depends upon me or the Government. I am aware that when there are dark clouds, people forget what sunshine is and what light is, but this does not mean that there is no sunshine or that light has disappeared. Sunshine is there and one, who has the eyes to see and also the strength of soul and mind, can progress himself and help his country to progress in that direction.

This is the lesson we have before us today, because we know that our struggle for freedom was not won easily. We had to make sacrifices, and only after passing through the days of darkness and despair did we come to the 15th of August, when our tricolour was unfurled for the first time. That tricolour is not a mere piece of cloth. Why do we respect our flag? In fact, every country respects its flag. Its brave soldiers are ready to lay down their lives for it. Why? Because it is the symbol of the country's strength, its hopes and its greatness. This is the reason that this piece of cloth commands so much respect. But, the real respect cannot be made manifest merely through words or merely by unfurling the flag. The real respect lies in creating an atmosphere for our flag to remain high. We keep it high during war, but we have to see that in our national, political, social and economic life we do not do anything whereby the respect of our flag diminishes in any way in the eyes of other countries and even our own. We all have to think over this and decide for ourselves as to how we can keep our flag flying high, and how we can strengthen our dear country. We shall have to decide the steps we will have to take for creating a bright future for our children and for the youth.

August 15 is a day of sacrifice. At the same time, it is also a day on

which we can peep into our future. Unless people of all classes, religions and languages are united, we cannot achieve anything. Communalism and casteism can only weaken us. In some respects, their influence has weakened, but in other respects it has increased. Now, if we have been able to lessen these influences why cannot we eliminate them totally? Why cannot we give justice to those who have remained oppressed and to whom justice has been denied all along?

When I started my speech I had said that my heart is full with sorrow and anxiety, but I want to tell you that this sorrow has in no way overwhelmed me to the extent that I cannot visualise the future. There is sorrow, there are anxieties and burdens. But, along with these, I can also see a bright future, not a distant one but a near future. I can also see how we have to move step by step, so that we can reach our goal. I have faith that all of you will be able to march forward with the same confidence and strength so that by the next 15th of August we are able to eradicate most of the evils of today and overcome most of today's difficulties and take the country from darkness to light. To all of you who are here in front of me in Delhi and to those listening to me on the radio in all the corners of the country, I once again extend my greetings and my good wishes for the future. I will once again tell you that we are all soldiers of India, whether in uniform or in civies. Like soldiers, we have to stand straight and march forward with courage and determination.