

Brothers and sisters, today is the fifth anniversary of Indian Independence. Five years ago, on this day, we had assembled at this spot in the old city of Delhi and unfurled the flag of freedom from the ramparts of the Red Fort. It heralded the beginning of a new chapter in Indian history. Five years have gone by since then. There have been big ups and downs in this period. We have been able to achieve something, but a great deal still remains to be done.

We, the millions in India, became heirs to a great heritage five years ago, the heritage of this vast country which spreads from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. But it is something more than that, for India's history dates back to thousands of years. We became heirs to thousands of years of history and grandeur and ups and downs which India has witnessed in past.

Where does our duty lie? How are we to mould the history of India and contribute to her vast heritage for the generations to come? Five years is not a very long period in the history of a nation. But these five years have been momentous in the history of the world and of India. We have had to face big problems. It is now for the historians to give their verdict about our achievements and failures. We should not keep harking back to the past, but look forward to the future. Duty calls, and the tasks left incomplete are constantly with us.

The tasks of a nation are, of course, never ending. There are millions of things waiting to be done and the process will never end. We can measure our achievements by the number of new buildings and schools and other constructions that have been completed. But the real yardstick to measure the worth of our work is to see to what extent we have succeeded in wiping the tears from the eyes of the poor who continue to be in misery. That is the real yardstick of India's progress, not the construction of buildings and grand projects that we have undertaken.

India is not a mere geographical expression extending from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. India is a nation of thirty six crores of men, women, and children. The welfare of India lies in the welfare of these thirty

six crores of people. Our time is nearly over. We have discharged our duty to the best of our ability, and now it is the younger people who must assume responsibility. So long as there was strength in us we carried the torch of freedom without faltering and never letting it fall. Now, the millions of young boys and girls in India have to carry on the task after us with honour and pride, and serve the country, and work for her progress, and above all, to find a way to wipe the tears of millions of people who are in great need. The most important task before us is to ensure that the millions of children in the country get the basic necessities of life, the opportunity for education, and proper physical and mental development, so that they can grow up and take on the burdens of this great country.

This is a challenging task. It cannot be done by merely passing laws or issuing edicts. The Government is certainly responsible for the people, but it cannot discharge its responsibility until the people of the country cooperate wholeheartedly and willingly. It is indeed a gigantic task, and this cannot be accomplished by the Government alone without the participation of all the people. There may be differences of opinion on political, social and economic issues. But basically our tasks can be done only by the mutual cooperation of all the people.

There are a number of issues on which there is a difference of opinion, and the barriers are insurmountable. What are the areas in which the cooperation of all the people is essential? After all, we are all citizens of this great country and, irrespective of our religion, caste, province, or language, we owe a duty to our country. All of us are shareholders in India's freedom and, therefore, equally responsible for maintaining and protecting that freedom. There are certain paths which tend to lead us astray, into violence and internecine quarrels in which voices are raised in anger against one another. It is absurd to think that such paths can lead the country to its goal of progress and development. Such thinking is born out of ignorance and is the surest path to ruin. We must be constantly vigilant against such tendencies because, no matter how great the principle behind the quarrel, the internal feud and disunity can only lead the country to ruin,

bloodshed and violence.

Then there are others who fight in the name of religion. We have learned the lesson of the evils of communalism in the past, and it is absolutely certain that it cannot lead to progress but only to further weakening of the country. We will fritter away our energies in futile squabbles instead of concentrating on progress. We must guard ourselves against such tendencies. Another category of people is the selfish black marketeers who get rich at the expense of the poor and needy.

These are the factors against which we must guard ourselves. We are citizens of a great nation with a glorious history behind it. The people of a great nation ought to be large-hearted and perform great deeds. They should not stoop to chicanery and wrong-doing. We achieved independence in a grand manner and now we must continue to uphold that tradition. We will hand over the torch of freedom, when our strength fails, to the youth of the country. Once our duty is done, we can be thrown on the scrap-heap. But, so long as there is strength in our minds and body, until the very last moment, we must toil for the cause of the country, in the service of India's millions and strive towards progress. Once our strength fails, our time will be up and we need not be bothered about what happens to us, for others will carry on.

We must set about this big task from the larger angle of the whole country, and not from the viewpoint of any single province, community, caste or religion. Every individual is free to follow his own religion and occupation. But ultimately the biggest duty, profession and religion of any person today is to serve the thirty-six crores of people, to uplift the poor, the downtrodden masses and to wipe out every tear from every eye of the suffering people.

We have had to suffer great hardships in the last few years. Natural calamities like drought and earthquakes had afflicted the country. Anyhow, we have nearly overcome our troubles.

This year we have fared much better than we have done in the past. There has been plenty of rainfall, and the position of food and other basic

necessities is better now than in previous years. Yet we must constantly bear in mind that India is a vast country and some areas of distress are likely to be present in the country at all times. The rainfall has been good and food production has been above average. Yet in some districts like Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Deoria and Basti in Uttar Pradesh, some regions in Bihar, and the Sundarbans area in West Bengal, Rayalaseema in the South, some districts in Mysore, Rajasthan and Saurashtra, conditions of great distress and privation prevail.

It is our duty to help these people in every way. Not only should we provide temporary relief but make arrangements to ensure that they can stand on their own feet and participate in the general progress of the country. Ultimately, the thirty-six crores of people of India belong to one large family and we must march together in step and go forward to achieve progress. Those who think that they can progress, while others lag behind, are mistaken, because the latter will drag others down with them. Therefore, it is imperative that the whole country must march together.

There are three main dangers facing the country. One is caused by disunity and internal dissensions, two, by the greed and avarice of black marketeers and profiteers who make money through corruption, bribery, etc., and the third by communalism. It is strange that, in spite of the bitter lesson that we have learnt in the past, there are some people who indulge in such activities, and even take pride in running down other religions and maintain that they are helping their own religion by doing so.

Recently, I was extremely annoyed to read about an incident in Allahabad, which was wholly uncivilized. It angered me that any individual in India could be so foolish. Yet there were some other foolish people who, instead of acknowledging that it was wrong and punishing the wrongdoer, retaliated by saying that they would not participate in the Independence Day celebrations, as a protest. How can any Indian behave like this? It may not be necessary that everyone should participate in the celebrations. But it is foolish to express anger and resentment on an auspicious day, no matter what the provocation may be. It is something which stains India's freedom

and sullies her honour.

Ultimately, we all must bear in mind that we have to march together. If we let ourselves drift away from our path because of the wrong action of one, a hundred or a thousand individuals, the country will be ruined. Please remember what India's ancient culture and tradition teach us. You must bear in mind what a great Indian has said over two thousand years ago, and not merely said but had his sayings engraved on big stones and columns all over the country. The great emperor Asoka said that if the followers of one religion respect and tolerate other religions, they, by doing so, only enhance the respect of their own religion. Those who show disrespect to the faith of others only degrade their own faith. This has been the principle of India's culture for thousands of years, and not of bitterness, hatred and feuds as some people in their ignorance today imagine.

If you look at the world, you will find it in the grip of a psychosis. There is a constant talk of war everywhere, and nobody knows when things may get out of hand and the world razed to the ground. We are a weak nation. Yet we have raised our voice for peace. We have done so in the past, and we will continue to strive for peace in the world until our last breath. But that is possible only when we all progress together as a nation.

While there is this talk of war throughout the world, there is another kind of war that is going on in South Africa. This has a relation in a way to India, because the method being adopted there is the method of satyagraha shown by a great soul of India. The war is for the principle of equality of all human beings.

Racialism is rampant in South Africa, with the whites brutally suppressing the blacks. The people of South Africa have learnt the lesson taught by Mahatma Gandhi, and are peacefully opposing racial oppression. I am happy to know that the Indian residents of South Africa are cooperating fully with the Africans in their struggle. I am convinced that the sympathy of the people of this country will go out to the struggling people of South Africa.

It is through this peaceful method we won freedom, and I hope that in

future too we will continue to solve our problems by peaceful means. Let us constantly bear this in mind, and renew our pledge once again on this day to work for the progress of India, for it is imperative for our very survival. We must continue to uphold the ancient tradition and culture of India and make every effort to maintain peace in the world. We have on our hands the urgent task of removing poverty and unemployment from the country. We may not hope to complete the task in our life time, but we must do what we can. After that, others will carry on.

I want you on this day to examine what our weaknesses are, and look inwards, instead of criticizing others. If everyone does his duty, the world will be a far better place. We must learn the lesson of cooperation and discipline from the members of our armed forces. They are meant to protect the country, and they are imbued with a sense of discipline. Men from all States and from all religions join the army, navy and air force and work together in harmony and cooperation. They do not fight among themselves. Our armed forces symbolize courage and unity. We must emulate the same sense of discipline and teamwork. We must not fight among ourselves but work with the firm intention of accomplishing the big tasks which confront us, of becoming self-reliant instead of depending on the Government for everything. Only then can India progress.