

Sisters, brothers and fellow countrymen, today is the sixth birthday of free India — the sixth anniversary of the day that we were re-born. Greetings to all of you on this occasion. We must first pay homage to the memory of that soul who was responsible for making India free, who breathed fresh life into a withered nation and made it almost as good as new. We must think of Mahatma Gandhi before we do anything else today. What does that mean? A great man came amongst us, shone like a bright star and then passed on. To think of him means refreshing our memories about the lessons that he taught us. What did he teach us? We must remember once again the principles by which we became strong and ultimately won freedom. If we forget those fundamental principles, we shall become weak and fail to do what we have set out to do.

The history of our country goes back thousands of years. India has occupied a very high position and has also fallen time and again. We must remember the things that gave us strength and those that weakened us. We must think about those fundamental things and our future goal and how we should try to reach it. We must also remember that that goal cannot be reached by wrong methods. Wrong means do not yield right results. This is a fundamental principle which we cannot forget. We reaped the fruits of right action and got freedom. But at the very moment when we were celebrating our victory, and I had unfurled this flag from this very spot, a terrible thing happened. There was a holocaust in Pakistan and in north India and millions of uprooted human beings trekked from both sides in search of refuge and shelter. We are paying the price for that terrible disaster till this evil can fail to leave its traces behind just as no good can fail to produce good results.

We have to think calmly about the tremendous tasks before us — the task of uplifting the thirty-six crores of Indians by making them better off and removing their difficulties. It is a tremendous task to build a new country out of a very ancient one. Where does our duty lie? It is obvious that the most important duty is to protect our freedom. Secondly, it is important to form friendly ties with all the countries of the world and

cooperate with them. We must not interfere in the affairs of any other country, nor should we tolerate any interference in our internal affairs. This is the path we must follow. The third important question is what we are going to do within the country. How are we going to make this large family of thirty-six crore human beings better off? Can families survive if they fight among themselves constantly and build barriers? We must remove the barriers that separate us. We must get rid of communalism because it is a wall that keeps us in separate compartments and weakens us. It breaks up the large Indian family into segments and fosters enmity between brothers. We must get rid of provincialism because if we put our province before the country, we shall slip back. We must put our country before everything else and remember that if India progresses, all of us will progress too and if she remains backward, no one in the country can go ahead, even if a district or a province might make some progress. Another thing which keeps us in separate compartments and weakens us is the ancient vice of casteism, for it encourages people to put their own narrow caste before their country.

There are tremendous tasks before us, the task of economic reconstruction, and of making the condition of people in India better by putting an end to unemployment and poverty. Ultimately, the strength of a country lies not in idle talk and building castles in the air, but in its economic conditions and in the character of the people and their unity. We have got political freedom but it is incomplete. It will be complete only when we solve our economic problems and freedom is within the reach of every single Indian. This is the most urgent task in which we are engaged at present, of removing poverty and unemployment from the country, so that every man and woman in India may produce wealth for themselves as well as for the country and thus increase our strength. These are the big tasks before us.

As far as world affairs are concerned, we must make efforts to establish peace in the world and prevent wars. We are striving towards this. We do not wish to get involved in world affairs for we want to set our own order first. But we have done what little we could and our efforts have been

appreciated and, at the same time, our responsibilities have increased. As you know, we are sending some of our troops to Korea. Why are these forces being sent? In the past, forces used to be sent out to fight in other countries, but our forces are going out not for war but for peace. Our forces are going at the invitation of other countries who are fighting with one another. They are agreed upon one thing and that is to invite our forces to come and do their duty. We do not wish to take on the additional responsibilities of the world but there are some duties which we cannot evade. So our forces are going to Korea. There is a talk of peace again in the world and to make an effort to change the atmosphere in the world away from war. Those efforts are being made but it is my regret that some people are still speaking the language of threats and aggrandisement. If we want peace in the world, it cannot be done by threatening one another or striking fear in others' hearts but by extending a firm hand of friendship. So the talk of peace is welcome and it would be better if some nations which are involved also change their thinking a little. Mere talk of peace cannot help unless there is a change of outlook.

So we are trying to discharge our duties abroad and at home establishing peace and improving the economic condition in the country. Big tasks have been accomplished in the last six years and I think that when history is written, all that has happened in this period will find mention in it. But at the same time it is also true that many of the things which we wished to do could not be done. The task is gigantic and the workers seem very few but if everyone pulls his weight the burden will be lighter.

A week ago, there were some incidents in Kashmir which caused our neighbour, Pakistan, much anxiety. I do not wish to say much about those incidents, because this is not the proper occasion. But I do wish to tell you that you must not pay heed to rumours and be constantly vigilant. I am amazed at the false news and rumours being published in Pakistani newspapers during the last few days about Kashmir and what our forces are supposed to have done or not done there. I wish to say very forcefully that our forces had no hand in those incidents. What is the meaning of

spreading such rumours in Pakistan and in some other countries by journalists? It is absurd and absolutely wrong to spread rumours and unnecessarily to incite people and foment bitterness between the countries. It is an internal matter of Kashmir. I am sorry about the recent incidents because it is always a matter of regret when there is a parting of ways between old friends and colleagues and I can tell you that it is not proper to talk ill of others on such occasions. If we do so, it is bound to boomerang on us. We are unhappy, but sometimes whatever our feelings may be, we have to do our duty with dignity and by the right means, always keeping in mind our fundamental principles. As I said, many things that have happened in Kashmir have made us unhappy. There is a story behind it and there have been other incidents elsewhere which have incited the people of Kashmir to some extent, like the communal incidents which occurred in Delhi and the Punjab. It is strange that they have succeeded in doing just the opposite of what they had wished to do. So you can see how bring about undesirable results, even if your intentions are pure.

I was talking about Kashmir. I want to repeat what I had said earlier, that we shall stick by the promise made five and a half years ago that the fate of Kashmir will be decided by the people of Kashmir. This is absolutely certain even today and there will be no interference or coercion on our part. The second thing is that a new Government was formed in Kashmir last week, but it is obvious that it can last only so long as they represent the people of Kashmir and are accepted by the elected Assembly. Otherwise another Government will have to be formed. Our principles apply equally all over India as well as in Kashmir.

So these incidents occurred in Kashmir and I can understand that they may have caused you some surprise for you were not fully aware of the past history. But it has been blown out of all proportion and all sorts of rumours were spread which increased the panic among the people, and in other nations, especially our neighbour, Pakistan, where there was a strange hostility and anger. Views were expressed on this issue which have no relationship with reality. I am not here to criticize anyone but to express

my sorrow that we should be so easily led astray and incited. This is not the way to solve major problems. I want to warn you that there are bound to be major issues and crises in India and the world and we shall be put to test. The question is whether we can think and act calmly and peacefully or rush around here and there in a blind panic. A nation is tested in this way and the more insurmountable the problems, the calmer we ought to be and act peacefully and wisely. When we have accepted the fundamental principle that the people of Kashmir will decide for themselves, there is no room for argument. We can certainly discuss the means by which this is to be done. But there can be no argument about principles. We have said this repeatedly ever since the Kashmir issue came up before us. We have also maintained that Kashmir has a special status. When it agreed to join India, we welcomed it. But even then, we have given it a special status owing to geographical and various other reasons. If people make a noise after all this and demand that Kashmir should have equal status with other States, they have obviously failed to understand the circumstances and the real situation. They can see that it has had just the opposite result.

I referred to Pakistan. I went to Pakistan a few days ago at the invitation of their Government and the people welcomed me with great affection. It had a powerful influence on me, especially the love of the people which was very similar to what you might find in any part of India. I found the same thing in Karachi and realized that after all I was not in any foreign country and there was not much difference between our country and theirs. I saw many familiar faces there, of old friends and colleagues and people who had gone away from India. The picture was the same, except for a few differences. In short, I did not feel for a moment that I was in some foreign country. This is the picture just now and it is possible that it may change if the people's attitude changes through some misunderstanding. So you can see from this how people's behaviour depends on the way they are treated. I want that we should not budge from our principles and ideals but follow the right path of friendship with all countries, even with Pakistan, and if there is any misunderstanding, it will be cleared up in due course. If there is constant tension and bitterness

between our countries, it cannot be good for either India or Pakistan. Fear can never yield good results and so we must not live in constant fear. The Prime Minister of Pakistan is coming here at our invitation just as I went to Karachi at their invitation. I want that the citizens of this ancient and historic city of Delhi should give him a grand welcome and show our large-heartedness and goodwill. It is possible that during his stay here, there may be a reception for him from this very Red Fort and in other places too.

So I want that all of us as a nation must remember the principles and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi on this day. We must think of our success but more so of our failures and the moments when we slipped in the last five or six years, because we have a lesson to learn from them. Let us once again take a pledge under this beloved flag of ours that we shall serve our country and promote unity among the people of various religions because everyone has an equal share in India's freedom. We must get rid of the barriers of provincialism, casteism and communalism and make the country strong. We must harness all our strength towards building a new India and not fritter it away in futile quarrels. We must also pledge that we shall try to establish peace in the world and extend a hand of friendship to all countries. We have to fight one battle, which we shall with all our might, and that battle is against the poverty of India. It is likely to be a long-drawn out battle and will require a great deal of hard work and sweat and tears. But it is worthwhile cause to uplift the millions of Indians and make them better off. This is no small task. This is our goal and we cannot rest till we reach it. You must remember these principles and go ahead. The life of a nation goes on, it is never-ending, and one goal follows another. We may come and go, but India is everlasting. Our only desire is that in the time that is given to us, we should also serve her a little and then pass on the mantle to the succeeding generations so that they may also share the memories of the freedom struggle and the hardships and sacrifices which had gone into the making of a new India.

Please say Jai Hind with me three times. Jai Hind, Jai Hind, Jai Hind.