

I greet my countrymen on this historic day from this historic place. There are certain historic events which leave a deep impress on the life of every individual. Our Independence is one such event. Independence Day has special significance for us because on this day we began a new life. On this day, nineteen years ago, the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, unfurled the national flag from the ramparts of Red Fort. On this day, he lit the torch of freedom and laid the foundation of Independent India.

On this day, our minds turn to our great leaders and to innumerable people from all parts of the country who flung themselves into the freedom struggle and made immense sacrifices. They were truly great men. We owe our freedom to their courage, forbearance and sacrifice. The responsibility of following the path shown by these great sons of India has devolved on us.

Standing here on the ramparts of Red Fort, my mind inevitably turns to India's past—a past studded with achievements in the fields of science and philosophy and in other fields. India was an advanced nation and had provided leadership to the world. How can we forget India's glorious past? It is for us to see that our record remains unblemished.

On this occasion, we naturally think of the Father of the Nation. Jawaharlal Nehru had once described Mahatma Gandhi as a magician. Despite his belief in science and the new world, Jawaharlal Nehru felt that the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi was the right path. Nonviolence', 'truth' and swadeshi summed up Gandhiji's message. It is my firm belief that this message still holds good.

Non-violence means that we should live in peace and amity, and entertain respect for one another's views. It also means that we should entertain respect for nations professing different ideologies.

Similarly, we want truth to pervade all our actions. Fearlessness is an essential part of truth. We should be as fearless today as we were during the struggle for freedom. We should not be afraid of making mistakes. We should not be afraid of making changes. We should be willing to adopt new

paths and to imbibe new ideas. It is very necessary for us to have a complete understanding of the problems facing us. Only then can we find the way out.

Swadeshi is the third part of Gandhiji's message. The country is faced with economic difficulties. We can improve the economic situation by imbibing the spirit of swadeshi. Swadeshi does not mean that we do not import at all. It only means that we should exercise the utmost economy, patronise our own goods and make full use of available resources. If, however, it becomes necessary to import with a view to learning new techniques, we should not hesitate to do so. The responsibility for popularising the swadeshi movement does not rest with the Government alone. Every citizen, be he a villager or a town-dweller, has to play an important part in popularising it.

We have accepted the socialist path because we feel that there is no other way of eradicating poverty. Democracy is the base of our socialism. Democracy confers many rights on the individual. These rights have corresponding duties. Our greatest duty is to help the nation achieve progress. We have launched many development programmes. The purpose of these programmes is the removal of poverty. We have to wage a relentless war against poverty. I appeal to my countrymen to join in this battle.

The peasantry is the most important wing of our society. Peasants are the predominant section of our population. I appeal to them to adopt modern techniques of agricultural production. I also need their Co-operation in bringing about reforms in rural life.

The role of labour is equally important. A great responsibility rests on their shoulders to increase production for defence and for other purposes. By increasing production, they will improve their own living standards and also help the nation in its march towards progress.

Our brave Jawans [soldiers] are guarding our frontiers. Our hearts go out to them. Let us remember that our defences lie not on the Himalayas but in every village, every town and every city. The peasant, the labourer,

the industrialist, the businessman, the team and the employee have all an equally great responsibility in this task. Each one of them should discharge this responsibility faithfully.

Artists, writers and thinkers, too, have a responsibility. This is to show the nation the right path. They should not hesitate to imbibe new ideas from abroad. They should also see that our own ideas flow to other countries.

We have to continue our march towards progress. There can be no let-up. Many sections of our society have suffered from neglect for centuries. There are the Harijans, the adivasis [tribal people], the hill people and the minorities. We pay special attention to them. We have drawn up programmes for their welfare. But much more remains to be done. I am fully aware of their difficulties. Some of them suffered hardship during the recent drought. Without their uplift, the nation cannot make much progress. I appeal for their co-operation in the tasks facing the nation.

Then, there are the women of India, belonging to all sections of society and engaged in multifarious tasks. They carry the responsibility of running the home, of bringing up the new generation and of braving the difficulties arising from spiralling prices. Women constitute 50 per cent of the country's population. For centuries, they have imparted strength to the nation. For centuries, they have upheld the noble traditions of India. We look to them again to maintain the high traditions of our culture. They continue to be the source of the nation's strength. We look to them for inspiration.

Innumerable people participated in the struggle for freedom. Many of them are not in our midst today. On this day, we pay our homage to them. Some of our freedom fighters are old. We are benefiting by their experience.

A new generation of Indians is coming up. They were not witness to the freedom struggle. They are not aware of the fervour which impelled us to fight for freedom. The responsibility for the nation's progress and development falls on them as much as it falls on those who were

associated with the struggle for freedom.

We are faced with threats on our borders. We are also faced with the threat of poverty and backwardness inside the country. We cannot fight the battle against poverty successfully unless we accept new ideas, unless we do away with superstition, unless we work with dedication and determination to attain progress, unless we are prepared to make sacrifices in the face of difficulties. It is the duty of every individual to lend his co-operation in this great task. No one can absolve himself of this responsibility. We cannot remain idle spectators. We are all soldiers in the fight against poverty.

At the time of aggression on our borders, our young men, our students, offered to lay down their lives to defend the country's territorial integrity. They were ready to write with their blood a new chapter in the history of India. The nation beckons to them again. They should be ready to take up the challenge. They have to infuse new life into the nation. They have to regenerate the nation.

We are assembled at the historic Red Fort today. The eyes of the entire nation are focused on us. We have the panorama of Indian history behind us and we have the vision of a bright future ahead. Every citizen should ask himself what he can contribute to the making of a bright future for the country. He should ask himself whether the nation's policies and programmes can be successfully implemented. On the answer to this question depends our progress. If the people are assailed by doubts and hesitation, difficulties will naturally arise. But if they are resolute in accepting the challenge, the nation can face both external and internal dangers and march towards progress. It is not an easy task; we never had any illusions about it. We may have made mistakes. We may not have moved with speed. But many of our difficulties are the result of the process of change and development itself. If we had remained static, our difficulties may not have increased, but we would have remained a poor and backward nation. We have deliberately chosen the more difficult path of change and progress.

Let us recapture the fervour which characterised our freedom struggle, and work with dedication for a new revolution which will energise the whole nation and inspire us to answer the call of our motherland. I have absolutely no doubt that we have it in us to achieve great things. But if we stray from the right path, we will be heading towards ruin, and the sacrifices of the great sons of India would have been in vain. Let us draw inspiration from those who fought for freedom and kept the nation's flag flying.

We extend our hand to all friendly nations. Our sympathies are with the victims of colonialism. We will continue to raise our voice against injustice and war everywhere. We want the subject peoples, the victims of oppression everywhere in the world, to breathe the air of freedom and to have full opportunities for progress.

I take a pledge on this day to work for the nation's uplift and to fight injustice everywhere. If we march unitedly as disciplined soldiers along the path shown by Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, we can make India a great nation. Let us all take this pledge.

I call upon you to join me in raising the great slogan given us by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. This slogan represents our strength. Join me in raising the slogan three times. Your voice is the voice of a great nation. It should reach the far-off mountains and every nook and corner of India. It should inspire courage and self-confidence in every Indian. Jai Hind, Jai Hind, Jai Hind.