

Each anniversary of Independence is sacred to the country. On each anniversary we remember our freedom fighters. On this day we recall the builders of modern India. Today, standing on the sacred soil of Red Fort, I recall 1857, when our first freedom fighters came to this Red Fort. I recall 1945, when soldiers of the Indian National Army were prosecuted here. Their only crime was that they fought for the freedom of the motherland. In 1947 at this very place, Panditji hoisted the flag of Independent India. Today, when we are assembled here, we remember the ideals, the principles, the values, and the dreams which inspired our freedom fighters to win freedom for the country. Today, all of us assembled here rededicate ourselves to that cause. Jawaharlal Nehru had said, "If we want to achieve great things, if we want to build a great India of our dreams, we shall have to become great ourselves and be worthy children of mother India."

On this fortieth anniversary, we naturally think not only of the events of the last one year but of the last 40 years. At the same time we look forward to the future as well.

Our elders got us freedom and entrusted us with the responsibility of safeguarding and maintaining that freedom. It is our responsibility to protect it.

During these four decades we faced many situations, a number of threats and also pressures. We faced conspiracies, we faced aggressions. We did not bend, we protected the unity and integrity of India with our courage, our blood and our sacrifices. We showed to the world that India is strong, India is one and it cannot be divided. We demonstrated to the world that no one can enslave us again. We made it clear that nobody can weaken the unity of India. We made it evident that no sacrifice is too big for the security of our country, the independence of our country and the unity of our country. No amount of labour, no amount of sacrifice is too high a price to pay of this purpose. Our soldiers, our officers give the best years of their lives to guard our frontiers and to defend us. In return we look after them, we provide them with the best of weaponry and ammunition. We see to it that they get the best tools they need. We are pledged to do so. The

freedom of India means the freedom of the people of India. The freedom of India means that we should strengthen the roots of democracy, and hold impartial elections in which every citizen can participate. We conduct Parliament in such a way that the voice of the people of India is listened to. It looks after and builds the future of the country. The meaning of free India is that it has an independent judiciary and rule of law. Free India means that it has a free and unfettered press. But it is not so easy to protect democracy, especially when we find that there are people who endanger our freedom through irresponsibility and indiscipline, who show disrespect to the Constitution and its institutions through their behaviour. Still we have demonstrated that the roots of democracy in our country are deep, Our people must remain alert. It is only a Government based on democracy that can function in a country like India.

Our great economic achievements have been acclaimed all over the world. Gandhiji had taught us that the process of development and the task of building the country should begin with the people by eradicating poverty. He taught us that the moral duties should be kept in the forefront in our national life.

We have taken the country forward towards these very objectives. Eradication of poverty has been given the highest priority. We have used our entire energy in eradicating poverty. Indiraji gave a call for eradicating poverty. She brought about a new awakening in the country as a result of which there was reduction in poverty. Because of her 20-Point Programme and other programmes for rural development, be it NREP or IRDP or any other, there has been improvement in the lives of the poor people of the country. We see that the picture has changed during the last 40 years. Forty years ago two-third of India's population was below the poverty line. Today two-third of the population has come above the poverty line.

This achievement is due to our anti-poverty programmes. They have also smashed the hold of feudalism. Eradication of poverty has been carried forward through the Green Revolution. As a result, in just a few years' time our production of foodgrains tripled. I remember the time when

there was drought 21 years ago, and Indiraji had to seek foodgrains from foreign countries. How small she felt when she had to bow down to others for foodgrains. It was then that she decided that never again would India appeal to foreign countries for foodgrains. She overruled her technocrats and her other advisers and took steps which brought about the Green Revolution in the North-Western part of the country. Indiraji's foresight and her determination coupled with the sweat and hard work of farmers of India, produced these desired results. Today we can say with pride that India will never go to others for food.

Similarly, at the time of independence, our manufactures were restricted to a few simple things. Today, with the development that has taken place during the last 40 years, our industries have progressed to such an extent that India can manufacture products comparable with those of advanced countries. We have today reached a stage from where we can leap forward with greater energy and compete with others. Our scientists have shown to the world that they are capable of achieving the highest in the field of science. Our technocrats have proved that they can master all types of technology successfully. The path ahead is long but none can say that we have not traversed far enough during the last 40 years. We are building the India of our future on the foundations of development that have been soundly laid during these 40 years. We shall see to it that our industries grow and expand rapidly. We shall see to it that our youth get new and more opportunities of employment. We have to see that our productivity rises, prices go down and quality improves. It should be our effort to associate our workers in the public sector units with management. We should ensure that our science and technology are not borrowed from foreign countries but develop in a way that benefits the country and also the poor people of the country. They should be able to meet our demands and requirements. We also have to see that they go ahead and see the work done in other parts of the world, meet the challenges and show the way to the world. The most important thing, however, is that we should not allow our attention to be diverted. Our attention must be concentrated all

the time on the poorest and the weakest person.

In the field of agriculture, production has increased a great deal, it has reached 15 crore tonnes. But we find that it is stagnating at 15 crore tonnes for the last three years. It is true that the monsoon has not been good during these years. Farmers in many regions and parts of the country have to face difficulties but we are resolved to ensure that the farmers' produce is not affected by the vagaries of weather in future. We have to take steps to ensure increase in agricultural production in spite of adverse weather. Some 70 percent of our population reside in rural areas, and almost the same percentage of people are poor and they earn their livelihood in the agricultural farms. The number of agricultural labourers is much more than that of farmers. We have to pay special attention towards them. If we want to eradicate poverty we have to begin with the farmers' fields. We have started spreading the Green Revolution and we are happy to see that during the last two years, an improvement has been noticed for the first time in Uttar Pradesh. Improvement has also been noticed in Bihar, Orissa and Bengal where the output of farmers is increasing. Poverty has been reduced in the rural areas. At the same time we have to pay special attention to the production of cotton, oilseeds and pulses. In this way we will see that with the spread of greenery poverty would be gradually reduced and would ultimately vanish.

This year we have provided more resources than ever before for programmes meant for the eradication of poverty. At the same time we have strengthened the administration as part of the poverty eradication programme. I have myself travelled far and wide, and after seeing the work with my own eyes and discussing the matter with the officers, strengthened these programmes and intensified them. Most important of all we have treated education as a part the poverty eradication programme because as long as the children of the poor people do not get good education, poverty cannot be eradicated.

Today, however, we find another problem before us, a very serious problem, that is of unemployment of the youth. We find signs of pessimism

in our youth. Millions of our young people do not succeed in getting employment and millions remain dissatisfied even after getting employment because they do not get what they want. We have to concentrate on the employment scene. There are some weaknesses and deficiencies in our set-up. There is employment, there are jobs, but the education, the skills that are required to fill up the vacancies are not there. Millions of boys and girls are matriculates, millions of them are degree holders but all cannot get white-collar jobs. We have taken care of these things in our new education policy. It has been our endeavour to make up the deficiency in our set-up. Through this policy we will ensure that the boys and girls coming out of schools and colleges, get such education which provides them employment. At the same time we will have to see that the rural employment programmes and other developmental programmes are implemented in such a way that the maximum number of people get jobs. But this will be possible only when we make a rapid progress in all fields—agriculture, industry, infrastructure and services. Most important, perhaps, is the fact that we should succeed in the matter of self-employment. It is not so difficult to give jobs to all if we work with determination, if we examine things properly and if we see to it that our education matches the required skills. If we increase the pace of progress, bring maximum number of young people to the technical trades and inspire them to start small enterprises, place maximum number of people in services, then that objective can be achieved. We have to see that all people do not aspire for just government jobs; they should also go elsewhere. This can reduce unemployment and we are determined to eliminate unemployment. We shall place programmes before the country in the coming years to ensure that unemployment is eradicated.

This year we are facing a difficult situation because of drought. Such a widespread drought has not been experienced for many years. We had faced a drought in 1965-66, that was grave but was confined to one or two regions. This year's drought has affected virtually all parts of the country. However, thanks to Indiraji's far-sightedness which increased the production of our farmers; our economy today is quite strong and we

can face the drought. There will be no shortage. No doubt there is drought, but we can face it today because of the Green Revolution brought about by Indiraji. In many States this is the third or fourth year of drought. The poor are facing great hardships. Their basic needs are uppermost in our minds. Our minds also go out to the landless people and the marginal farmers who have been rendered unemployed and who are not getting any work today. In many States there is scarcity of drinking water as well. In many States there is shortage of fodder for the cattle.

We will face the situation with all our might. As the head of the Government, I pledge that we will concentrate all our attention and accord the highest priority to deal with this drought situation. We will see to it that we are able to reach foodgrains to every nook and corner of rural India from our granaries. We will ensure that enough employment is provided to the poor people through relief works. We will also ensure that employment is provided to all those who really need it. We will see to it that there is no dearth of food. Nobody will have to go hungry. We will strengthen our public distribution system so that foodgrains reach all parts of the country, at the doorsteps of the people, especially in the rural areas so that people do not have to go far, for food. We will ensure that there is no scarcity of drinking water. We shall also pay special attention to the problem of fodder scarcity so that our cattle wealth and animals are also able to face this difficult situation.

We have to make a large collective effort to deal with this drought situation. At the Centre, as also in the States, we will see to it that all required assistance is provided by us. At the same time it is also to be seen that the State Governments act firmly and with speed because it is they who reach down to the villages. We will give all assistance but the State Governments will have to move fast. I have written to the Chief Ministers of States which are facing the drought situation. I shall call a meeting of the Chief Ministers in which we shall discuss and decide how the drought situation can be met collectively, and identify steps which are necessary to save the poor people from difficulty. A great deal remains to be done. But

since the country is strong, we will accomplish the job and successfully face this challenge.

It is, however, necessary that we devote our full attention and energy to this problem. Our granaries are full. We have the experience and capacity today. We can face this challenge of starvation without any foreign assistance, but we must be clear that it is not necessary to slow down the pace of development in order to deal with the drought situation. By stalling development, by suspending development, we will have to face a greater crisis in the days to come. We have to find resources so that without reducing or slowing the pace of development we can face the present challenge. There is need for economy, austerity; it is necessary to reduce or eliminate non-essential expenditure. We have already advised each Ministry to start taking such steps. The State Governments should also take similar steps. The Government will do whatever it can, but it cannot deal with such a drought situation alone. In such a situation, it is necessary for the people to meet this challenge together with the Government. The young people especially should come forward to face this challenge hand in hand with the Government and others. We have to see that each man and woman and individual and each community as a social group will join hands with the Government to face this grave situation. We should build up such a movement that reaches all parts of the country.

This is the time when more fortunate people should come to the rescue of the less fortunate ones. We have to see that no anti-social element takes advantage of this situation to earn money and exploit the miseries of the poor people. We will have to deal firmly with such elements. Hoarding will have to be stopped, profiteering will have to be eliminated. If we face the anti-social elements resolutely we will be able to keep the situation under control. We will not spare any effort. With all the might of the Government, we will see to it that the anti-social elements are kept under control. Any lacuna in the law that may come in the way of dealing with such people, will be removed, and the Government will acquire the powers necessary for dealing with them, but I appeal to all to co-operate

fully in constructive co-operation from every quarter- from legislators, from Members of Parliament, from the Opposition, from experts, and from the press. In the context of this challenge, it is necessary to forge a national effort to meet the situation effectively.

India has made remarkable social progress during the last 40 years. We find that casteism has decreased during these years. Our women have become stronger. We have provided more opportunities to our girls to go to schools and colleges. We have specially encouraged them to go to schools. Last year, we consolidated further the anti-dowry law to strengthen the hands of women and we find that since then the number of girls killed because of dowry problem has gone down. We hope to further increase the strength of our women. We also have to pay attention towards our labourers and their problems. During the last two years, we have passed a legislation to prevent child labour. This law prohibits all employment of children in hazardous industries. The legislation provides for the education of children and also takes care of their food and health. The problem of agricultural labourers had been attended to during the past 40 years. We have set up a National Commission to study the problems of agricultural labourers and suggest programmes to deal with their problems.

The tribal people have their own problems, I have myself visited those districts, the villages and also their huts to have an idea of their problems and the way government programmes are being implemented, where these programmes need to be strengthened and where there is need for assistance. We have paid special attention to the problems of our Harijan brothers. We will see to it that the hands of the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are so strengthened that he is able to deal firmly with the situation wherever the Harijans and the tribal people have not been given their due.

We will see to it that the legislation intended to uplift the Harijans and the tribal people are strengthened, the provisions are effectively implemented, and nobody is able to stall this work. We have implemented very effectively the 15-Point directive of Smt. Indira Gandhi relating to the



minority communities.

The middle class population has increased in the country because of increase in economic opportunities. A large number of people now go to different parts of the country to find employment. More and more people are now undertaking journeys in the country. People from one part of the country are going to other parts in search of jobs; they are getting employment outside their homes, their villages, their districts and sometimes even outside their respective States. This consolidates the unity of the country as such people are able to see the vastness of the country. The unity and integrity of the country is strengthened through these people. We have achieved a lot during the last 40 years but even then, in spite of the social progress, a lot still remains to be done.

Some of the problems are old and many new ones have cropped up. Communal feelings have come to the fore in some places. We see the misuse of religious places. The religious feelings of the people are being toyed with. We find one community fighting with another community, a brother fighting with his brother, a man fighting with another man; all these cause danger to our secularism.

Communalism and Sectarian forces were causing harm to the unity and integrity of the country during the days of the freedom struggle. We had fought on the basis of concepts denouncing communalism. Even today, there is no room for communalism in India. India is an ancient country inhabited by people believing in different faiths since centuries, People belonging to all religions and all thoughts have resided here since times immemorial. We have seen that people of all traditions and all faiths have lived like brothers in our society. There is no room at all for communalism in our society, our democracy. We have to face this challenge. It is the duty of every citizen to ensure this by all his actions and thinking, He should maintain cordiality in the society. A majority of the people who are deeply religious believe in true religion, and are secular and they should come forward and face those few people who weaken the country, who believe in sectarianism, who believe in fundamentalism, who

believe in violence and who believe in looting and terrorism. There is no place in India for those people who try to weaken the country in the name of religion. People of different communities have lived in this country for centuries, peacefully working together, playing together and participating constructively in each others lives. Sometimes, however, hatred raises its head all of a sudden and things are on fire and there is terror.

Generally, outsiders are responsible for this and sometimes because of religious leaders. These people weaken us by spreading rumours, creating misunderstanding and spreading falsehood.

Normally, innocent people fall victim to such conspiracies. Whenever such sectarian conflicts come to the fore, maximum harm is caused to the innocent people/ They are the worst sufferers. Our war on sectarian forces cannot, however, be fought only through the machinery of law. This should be a people's war. It must be fought in every locality, in every area. We have to ensure that all of us are one in this war against dangerous criminals, and stop the misuse of religion, and eliminate the people spreading hatred. Those who are sowing the seeds of hatred among us must be crushed. We must face such people who are out to destroy our society. Communalism gives rise to separatism. Communalism produces terrorism and efforts are being made to eliminate our democracy through communalism, separatism and terrorism.

We notice all sorts of methods are being employed to weaken our country and to disturb peace in our country. Efforts are being made to create ill-feelings among the tolerant and peaceful people of this country. We do not have to submit to separatists; we have to face them. We will face all of them with all our might. We will face those who try to weaken our freedom, our security and our future through threats, pressurisation and causing infights. We will not allow them to rise. We will not stop till terrorism is completely eliminated or till the terrorists do not return to the country's mainstream giving up their arms. We do not have to give up our courage, we do not have to be fearful. Gandhiji has said, "Independence means fearlessness against death. A nation afraid of death cannot become free

and if it attains freedom it cannot protect it."

The words of Gandhiji should resound in our ears today and we must face this challenge boldly. We must remember that we will not counter them for taking revenge. If we try to take revenge, then it will only serve the designs of the terrorists. Revenge would only bring victory to terrorism. If we use restraint, terrorism will weaken and will ultimately be defeated. We must not fall into the trap of terrorism. Gandhiji has said that violence cannot be an answer to violence. Only non-violence can be the answer. India holds its head high in the world today. The voice of India is heard in the world with respect. Why? How is it that a country which was a slave, poor till 40 years ago, and about which people used to think that it would never stand on its own and could not safeguard its freedom, now speaks out in such a strong voice? It has been possible, because we moved forward taking with us the concepts of Gandhiji, principles of Panditji and the path shown by Indiraji.

We have learnt to speak fearlessly, we have learnt not to submit under pressures, we have learnt to move forward on the path of non-violence with courage and facing the challenges boldly. We launched a movement against the atomic weapons in the world during the last 40 years. Today many powerful countries are attracted towards it. The feeling that Gandhiji and Panditji had brought to the fore before our Independence, is now spreading throughout the world after 40 or 50 years. It is just insanity that we continue to manufacture weapons while the available weapons alone can extinguish the entire world 50 times. It is really madness that 15 to 20 million rupees are spent every minute in the world on arms race. Even a small fraction of it can be of great help in eradicating poverty, disease and unemployment. India is paying attention to these things. We are paying attention to human rights and human dignity.

South Africa, where Gandhiji had started his first satyagraha, is still reeling under slavery. The flag of freedom has not still been unfurled there. It is shameful that 100 years have passed, hundreds and thousands of freedom fighters have offered sacrifices including their lives, but the place

from where the flame of freedom rose is still under slavery. We have raised the question of poor people in the world. We have taken up the cause of suppressed sections of the world. We have demonstrated that our voice is that of balance tolerance, compassion, truth and non-violence.

Last month we signed an agreement in Sri Lanka- an agreement that proved the correctness of our policy, which demonstrated that the impact of our foreign policy is good and that India was moving on the right path. This is an important achievement in these 40 years. The latest agreement that we have reached and signed has brought peace and co-operation in Sri Lanka. This has strengthened the cause of peace and co-operation in the entire region. We have checked the activities of those who were endangering the security of the entire region and have prevented rivalries of the power blocs reaching our neighbourhood. This has strengthened the cause of non-alignment. It has been proved that countries can solve their problems through dialogue without allowing the big powers or other sections or parties to come in. We have seen that whenever outsiders interfere, the problems become more serious and difficult. Today, on the 40th anniversary of our Independence, we have to re-dedicate ourselves to these ideas and concepts.

Our greatest asset is the system given to us by our forefathers. We have seen that the system is in tune with our ancient traditions and our culture, which have flourished uninterrupted for thousands of years. We used that spirit in our struggle for freedom and should use it in building a new India. Today, our greatest attainment is our democracy. We have to safeguard it, consolidate it. No weakness should be allowed to permeate it. Still, we find that certain elements are trying to weaken it in a bid to eliminate it. This system has existed for the last 40 years, and we have found that under it India has gained in strength, it has remained one, it has progressed and has been able to face the world. If some people for their own petty political development want to disrupt the faith of the people and harm our democracy just for their own development and benefit, we must stand up to them. We have to see to it that they do not gain in strength. We

have to ensure that they are not able to divert the attention of the country. We must also see that they do not succeed in conspiring internally or from outside to weaken the country. It is true that a few things are not well in our society and our system. We will see to it that the people who are doing wrong things are dealt with promptly and firmly and are punished. Our concentration today should, however, be on national reconstruction and not on rumours. We must pay attention to national reconstruction and take the country on the path of progress. We should correct the flaws in our system and promote such policies which will further strengthen our society and the system. We are doing so and we are trying to move on the path of progress. We would like to see that all sections of the people, especially the youth, start a national campaign against complacency, sectarianism and corruption. We have to abide by the principles which Gandhiji placed before us. We must safeguard our freedom. We must strengthen our society. It should be our endeavour to see that people belonging to all sections of our society work for the welfare of the poor and the weak, and maintain communal and religious harmony. We must ensure that Harijans, tribals and women progress in all respects in our society and consolidate their position. We have to be guided by Gandhiji's principles of truth, non-violence and human unity.

At the same time, we have to ensure that we remain self-reliant. We must remember that only right means can ensure the right end. Gandhiji's message was not meant for his generation alone. It was for all the future generations. This message is as important for the reconstruction and consolidation of the country as it was for the achievement of our freedom. It is also of importance in the context of making the world stronger.

Today, I congratulate all my 78 crore brothers and sisters residing in different parts and remote areas of this peaceful country, in this our India - yours and mine - of those who are rich, who are poor, young and the old, people belonging to all religions, people belonging to different communities, people belonging to all States, people speaking different languages, and people having different cultures. Our unity is sound, our integrity is eternal.

We take inspiration from the past, to move confidently into the future. It is our firm resolve that we will unitedly move ahead on the path of progress to safeguard our freedom, our democracy, our secularism, our socialism, our security and our non-alignment, stage by stage, and make India really great.