

from
RADIO ADDRESS FROM NEW DELHI
1948

Jawaharlal Nehru

After many years of struggle, India finally won its independence from Britain on August 15, 1947. One year later, on the first anniversary of India's independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru spoke to his people in a radio address. In his speech, Nehru reviewed the progress of the new nation and encouraged his people to meet the difficult problems that lay ahead.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY: Identifying Problems

According to Nehru, what were the main problems facing the Indian people? How did he propose they overcome these difficulties?

Fellow countrymen, comrades and friends, a year ago on this very day and at this very hour I broadcast to you from this place. Free India is one year old today. But what trials and tribulations she has passed through during this infancy of her freedom! She has survived, in spite of all the peril and disaster that might well have overwhelmed a more mature and well established nation. We have reason to be thankful for this achievement and for the many other achievements that stand to the credit of our people. Let us not belittle our record or forget the courage, the hard work and the sacrifice with which our people have faced and overcome many of these perils during this fateful year.

But let us also not forget where we have failed or where we have erred. For our failures and errors have been many. Some of these are obvious enough, but the real failure has been a failure of the spirit and a falling away from the high standards set by the Father of our Nation [i.e., Mohandas K. Gandhi, who was assassinated on January 30, 1948], under whose wise guidance we had struggled and marched for over a quarter of a century. He taught us that worthy ends could only be achieved through worthy means, that ideals and objectives could never be divorced from the methods adopted to realize them. He had told us to cast out fear, for fear is not only ignoble but is also the parent of hatred and violence.

Many of us forgot this lesson and fear gripped us, fear not of some distant adversary, but fear of one another, and evil deeds followed in its train.

The Master who guided us and inspired us is no more. We have to shoulder the burden ourselves now and the first question that we have to put to ourselves is this: Do we stand by his teaching and message or do we stray into new paths? I want to tell you that this year of hard trial has convinced me more than ever that if India is to prosper and grow in stature, as she must and will, it will be through

adherence to that message and teaching. I know I am feeble and have often proved unworthy of India to whose service I had pledged myself so often. But however unworthy we may be of India, we have still something of the strength that the Master gave us. That strength comes not only from him, but from his message, and so today I pledge myself anew to the service of the Motherland and of the ideals that Gandhiji placed before us.

All of us talk of India and all of us demand many things from India. What do we give her in return? We can take nothing from her beyond what we give her. India will ultimately give us what we give her of love and service and productive and creative work. India will be what we are: Our thoughts and action will shape her. Born of her fruitful womb, we are children of hers, little bits of the India of today, and yet we are also the parents of the India of tomorrow. If we are big, so will India be, and if we grow little minded and narrow in outlook, so also will India be.

Our troubles during the past year were largely the result of this narrowness in outlook and pettiness in action which is so foreign to India's great cultural inheritance. Communalism¹ threatened to crush the free spirit in us, the communalism of the Muslim, of the Hindu and of the Sikh. Provincialism² came in the way of that larger unity which is so essential to India's greatness and progress. The spirit of faction spread and made us forget the big things that we had stood for.

We have to find ourselves again and go back to the free India of our dreams. We have to rediscover the old values and place them in the new setting of a free India. For freedom brings responsibility and can only be sustained by self-discipline, hard work, and the spirit of a free people.

So let us be rid of everything that limits us and degrades us. Let us cast out fear and communalism and provincialism. Let us build up a free and democratic India, where the interest of the masses of our people has always the first place to which all other interests must submit.

Freedom has no meaning unless it brings relief to these masses from their many burdens. Democracy means tolerance, tolerance not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us. With the coming of freedom our patterns of behavior must change also. . . .

There is conflict and there are rumours of greater conflict in India and all over the world. We have to be ready for every emergency and contingency. When the nation is in peril, the first duty of every citizen is to give his or her service to the nation without fear or expectation of reward. But today I do not wish to speak of conflicts and wars but rather of peace and cooperation and I want to say to all the nations of the world, including our neighbour country, that we stand for peace and friendship with them. The only war that we want to fight with all our might is the war against poverty and all its unhappy brood.

All the world suffers from the after-effects of the World War, and inflation and rising prices and unemployment oppress the people. In India we have all these

1. **Communalism:** divisions created by religious differences and animosities

2. **Provincialism:** divisions created by ethnic, geographic, and linguistic differences

and, in addition, the care of vast numbers of our brothers and sisters who have . . . been driven away from their homes to seek a new life elsewhere.

It is this war we have to fight, the war against economic crisis and to rehabilitate the disinherited.³ In this war there is no hatred or violence but only service of our country and our people. In this war every Indian can be a soldier. This is no time for individuals or groups to think of a narrow self-interest forgetting the larger good. This is no time for wrangling or the spirit of faction.

And so I appeal to all my countrymen and countrywomen who have the love of India in their hearts and the passion to raise her masses, to cast aside the barriers that separate them and to join together in this historic and magnificent task worthy of a great people.

To all those in our Services, civil and military, I would appeal for a single-minded devotion to the cause of India and for integrity, hard work, efficiency and impartiality. He who fails in this at this critical hour, fails in his duty to India and her people.

To the youth of the country I would make a special appeal for they are the leaders of tomorrow and on them will be cast the burden of upholding India's honour and freedom.

My generation is a passing one and soon we shall hand over the bright torch of India, which embodies her great and eternal spirit, to younger hands and stronger arms. May they hold it aloft, undimmed and untarnished, so that its light reaches every home and brings faith and courage and well-being to our masses.

Source: Radio address by Jawaharlal Nehru, August 15, 1948, from *Independence and After* by Jawaharlal Nehru (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971). Reprinted by permission of Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, New York.

3. **disinherited:** those deprived of human rights

THINK THROUGH HISTORY: ANSWER

Nehru stated that division within the people was the biggest problem. Division by religion, geography, culture, and language threatened the sovereignty of India. He urged people to work with “single-minded devotion to the cause of India and for integrity, hard work, efficiency and impartiality.” He called for the people of India to cast aside their differences for the sake of India. Nehru also encouraged the Indians to be soldiers in the war against poverty.