

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRIMATI PRATIBHA DEVISINGH PATIL
TO THE NATION ON THE EVE OF REPUBLIC DAY, ON JANUARY 25, 2012**

Dear Citizens,

On the eve of our 63rd Republic Day, I convey my warmest greetings to all of you across the country, from every walk of life and in different parts of the world. I convey my special greetings to the Armed Forces and the Para-Military Forces who guard our frontiers with great vigil and valour, in high mountainous terrains, deserts and the plains, on the coasts and the seas. I also convey my best wishes to our internal security forces and to our civil services. I compliment all citizens for their contribution to the process of nation-building.

We are living in a world that is complex and challenging. Forces of globalization have created an interlinked and interdependent world. No country exists in isolation; it is continuously being influenced by external developments. All nations, developed and developing, are facing the impact of global economic instability, as well as problems of unemployment and inflation, in varying degrees. Indeed, the 21st Century has brought in its trail a host of issues at a breath-taking pace. There are growing aspirations of the people, coupled with their expectations of immediate solutions. We are observing, an information explosion and ever-newer technological inventions. These have altered lifestyles and there is also a growing quest for materialism. There are persistent questions about how growth and resources will be shared in a more equitable manner. There are worries about the direction in which the human community is heading in this age of globalization, knowledge and technology.

For us in India, the discourse is about how an ancient civilization and a young nation, will move ahead to take India to its destiny. Our vision and our goals are clear. We look at building our country, as one whose economy demonstrates a robustness to grow, so that we can become a developed nation. For us, however, economic prosperity alone is not enough. We look towards an India, where there is equity and justice. We look at democracy, rule of law and human values, as being essential for making our country strong. We want a scientific and technological outlook in our people. We also look towards India as a country which will continue to bring moral force on to the global stage. I believe that there is a unity behind this vision of India. But, yet, sometimes one gets distracted by discordant pulls and pressures. How should we proceed to build our

nation and its people? I believe that the answer lies in our age old values; the ideals of our freedom movement; the principles of our Constitution, as also in our unity, a positive attitude and our aspiration to grow.

It is often said, but not fully realized, that we are very fortunate to have a rich legacy of values, traditions and teachings. The ageless spirit of India, the eternal voice of India, has been resonating through millennia. What are those intrinsic qualities which have seen India prosper through centuries and eras? What is the message that should light our path, as we chart our future course? Our civilizational ethos contains the lessons of duty and truth. It tells us to be humane in all our thoughts and deeds. It highlights the qualities of compassion, care and of respect for others. It teaches that human beings and nature must exist in harmony with each other. All issues should be viewed in the context of humanity as a whole. Concepts, like 'समन्वय', 'सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः', 'वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्', are the very essence of Indian thought. This philosophy has given succeeding generations the inherent strength to grow, embracing in their fold a vast diversity of cultures, languages, religions and communities. So, when the question is asked, as to what ideals should be placed before the new generation, to take the country forward, should then there be any dithering or doubt in a country like India? As the inheritors of thousands of years of history and culture, we should follow the high ideals of our age-old civilization. More particularly, the youth should understand this, as they are the architects of the future as well. Our past becomes the essential guide for the future as well. In this context, I recall the lines of Gurudev Tagore, "Every great people holds its history so valuable because... it contains not mere memories, but hope, and therefore the image of the future." The past of India has been glorious and so must be its future.

We can also draw inspiration from our independence movement. It was a unique struggle, as it involved non-violent methods and required extraordinary mass discipline, steadfastness and patience. We followed this course, under the leadership of Gandhiji, because we had faith in ourselves and in our strength. Surely, we can demonstrate the same discipline in nation building. But, how do we do this? It is, only when we resolve to make the goal of nation building more important, than anything else and, show strong belief in it. It is then that courage, confidence and determination, shall be our companions in this task, which has to be carefully piloted in a constitutionally acceptable order.

In fact, during various times of difficulties or when searching for an answer, the Constitution has provided us our moorings. It was framed by those who had participated in the freedom struggle, and had a deep understanding of the aspirations of the people, and of our culture. The Constitution has been and should be our compass, guiding us in nation-building. It is the charter of our democracy. It is the document guaranteeing individual freedoms to its citizens. It is the basis on which institutions of the State have been created and have derived their powers and functions. Our Constitution is a living and dynamic instrument, which has demonstrated its ability to be flexible enough to meet the demands of changing times, while retaining its basic features. Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar in his closing speech at the Constituent Assembly said, “The first thing in my judgment we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives.” Unquote.

Dear Citizens,

There is tremendous work to be done to move forward on our social and economic agenda, if we are to achieve fast, inclusive and sustainable growth. Our foremost priority is the removal of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. All social welfare programmes must be implemented efficiently. Agencies involved in the delivery of services should have a strong sense of duty and work in a transparent, corruption-free, time-bound and accountable manner.

We have a population which is predominantly young. With education and training, they can become skilled and, thus, capable of finding their livelihoods, starting their own businesses and thus, becoming productive assets. Reinforcing our health and education sectors is fundamental for developing our human resources. Primary education is now a fundamental right for children. There is a commitment to universalize secondary education. Expansion of school education will also require increase in the number of higher education institutions. This process has to be structured with great thoughtfulness, to ensure quality and excellence. Moreover, education must reach every section of our society, as must access to health reach all. We need to expand health services, particularly in rural areas. We need quality medical facilities for our population, which are affordable. In today's era of ICT, technology can be very useful in our mission of health and education. In fact, science and technology is a critical input for the growth of the nation and for all sectors of the economy. Focus on research and development is an

investment in our future. Our agriculture, industry and service sectors need to be working more efficiently, with greater scientific inputs and more inter-linkages with each other. Agriculture, however, is one sector whose integration with other sectors of the economy remains inadequate. We need to look at models of partnership, of farmers with industry and with R&D institutions in various activities, so that, not only does agricultural productivity increase, but farmers benefit as well. Special focus is necessary on dryland farming, given its enormous potential and, the fact that, a large proportion of farm labour and poor farmers are dependent on it. At the same time, it is very important to build our physical infrastructure – such as roads, ports and airports, to overcome constraints to rapid growth.

I strongly believe that women need to be drawn fully into the national mainstream. Empowerment of women will have a very big impact on creating social structures that are stable. The National Mission on Empowerment of Women set up in 2010, should help in the co-coordinated delivery of women-centric and women-related programmes. An important component of women's development is their economic and social security. Social prejudices prevalent in our society which have led to gender discrimination need to be corrected. Social evils like female foeticide, child marriage and dowry must be eradicated. Status of women is an important indicator of progress in a society.

Dear Citizens,

India can take pride in its democratic record, but as in any functional democracy, it faces pressures and challenges. An important feature of a democracy is the constant expression of opinions. This process of incessant dialogue should flow in such a manner, that we are willing to listen to each other. Those who believe in democracy must try to see whether there is rationale in the others' point of view. Gandhiji once said, "Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side. We shut the doors of reason when we refuse to listen." The purpose of discussions and deliberations is to find solutions. Often, we are quick to find blame with others; but, yet are unable to give constructive responses. There seems to be a tendency to doubt almost everything. Do we not have faith in our own people's strengths and in our institutions? Can we afford distrust amongst ourselves? Nations are built through great patience and sacrifices. Concord and not discord is the way forward for a country as large as India. All issues, therefore, must be resolved through dialogue and there can be no place for violence. Negativity and rejection cannot be the path for a vibrant country that is moving to seek its

destiny. Our work, our values and our approach, must be based on the vast capability and capacity that India and its people have.

Our institutions may not be flawless, but they have coped with many challenges. Our Parliament has enacted path-breaking laws. Our Government has put together schemes for the progress and welfare of the people. Our judiciary has a reputable standing. Our media too has played an important role. With all institutions working together for the same national purpose it will create a stream of positive energy. Our effort to improve is an on-going process. While bringing about reforms and improving institutions, we have to be cautious that while shaking the tree to remove the bad fruit, we do not bring down the tree itself. There will be short term pressures, but in this process we must not lose sight of the long term goals, and must work together on our core national agenda. I do hope in the spirit of national interest, matters of national importance, are discussed and solutions are found between different stakeholders. This will strengthen the roots of our democracy and the foundations of our nation. We have a shared future, and we should not forget that it can be achieved if we demonstrate a sense of responsibility and a show of unity. I think India could set an example before the democratic world of progress and growth.

Dear Citizens,

India's foreign policy is aimed at the promotion of an environment that is conducive to its socio-economic transformation. We seek to build bridges of cooperation and friendship with all countries of the world. We constructively engage with the international community to find responses to global challenges. The role and stature of India, has been growing and our nation has been scaling up in the ladder of the comity of nations. India seeks an architecture for global institutions that is more reflective of contemporary realities. We are also proud of the contributions of the Indian Diaspora, spread over many countries and across continents, to the economic, professional and political fields of the countries where they live.

Dear Citizens,

In conclusion, I would like to say that we must build a strong, prosperous nation, based upon a firm system of values. As we remove poverty, let us also enrich our thoughts. As we remove disease, let us all remove ill-will towards others. As our youth

study more and acquire more knowledge, let them also learn to be more involved in activities for the progress of the nation, other than only self advancement. As we legislate, let us also understand that the most effective law is the conscience of citizens. As we advance in science and technology, let us realize and understand that it is more for human welfare. As we use the Earth's resources, let us not forget to replenish and renew its vitality. On the eve of our Republic Day, let me once again convey my greetings, to all fellow citizens and end with the following lines which describe an India we should work for:

बहें जहां सदभाव की नदियां |
उगें जहां नैतिकता की फ़सलें |
सब मन एकता का गीत सुनाएं |
पग-पग देश का विकास बढ़ाएं |
मिलकर ऐसा देश बनाएं |

JAI HIND!