

**FAREWELL ADDRESS TO THE NATION
BY
THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND**

New Delhi, July 24, 2022

Dear fellow citizens,

Namaskar!

Five years ago, you had reposed immense trust in me, and chose me as the President of India through your elected representatives. As I demit my office at the end of my term, I wish to share a few ideas with you all.

Let me begin by expressing my deep gratitude to all fellow citizens and elected representatives. I have been inspired and energised by my interactions with citizens during my visits across the country. Farmers and workers from small villages, teachers shaping young minds, artists enriching our legacy, scholars investigating various facets of our country, business-people creating wealth for the nation, doctors and nurses serving the people, scientists and engineers engaged in nation-building, judges and advocates contributing to the justice-delivery-system of the country, civil servants who run the administration smoothly, our social workers actively connecting every social segment with development, preachers and masters of all sects who maintain the flow of spirituality in Indian society – you all have continuously helped me discharge my duties. In short, I received full cooperation, support and blessings from all sections of society.

I will especially cherish the occasions when I had an opportunity to meet our brave jawans of the armed forces, para-military forces and the police. Their patriotic zeal is as amazing, as it is inspiring. During my visits abroad, whenever I spoke with members of the Indian diaspora, I found their love and concern for the homeland very touching. During investiture of civil awards, I had an opportunity to

meet some of the most exceptional minds at work. With diligence and dedication, they are busy creating a better tomorrow for their fellow Indians.

All these re-affirm the belief that the nation is after all composed of its citizens; and with each of you striving to make India better and better, the nation's great future is secure.

These experiences remind me of my childhood and how grand historical events shape our individual lives.

When I was growing up in a small village, the nation had only recently achieved independence. There was a fresh wave of energy to rebuild the country; there were new dreams. I too had a dream, that one day I would be able to participate in a meaningful way in this nation-building exercise. A young boy living in a mud house could not have any idea about the highest Constitutional office of the Republic. But it is the testament to the strength of India's democracy that it has created pathways to let each citizen take part in the shaping of our collective destiny. If that Ram Nath Kovind from village Paraunkh is addressing you today, it is solely thanks to the inherent power of our vibrant democratic institutions.

Since I have mentioned my village, let me also add here that among the most memorable moments of my life has been visiting my home during my term and touching the feet of my teachers at Kanpur to seek their blessings. This year, the Prime Minister also honoured my village Paraunkh with his visit. This connection with our roots has been the essence of India. I would request the younger generation to continue this tradition of staying connected with their village or town, their schools and teachers.

Dear citizens,

The nation has been celebrating 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'. Next month, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of Independence. We will enter the 'Amrit Kaal', the 25-year period leading to the centenary of Independence. These anniversaries are milestones on the journey

of the Republic, a journey to discover its potential and to offer its best to the world.

In modern times, the glorious journey of our country commenced with the awakening of nationalist feelings during colonial rule and the launch of the freedom struggle. There were many uprisings across the country in the nineteenth century. The names of many of the heroes who brought hopes of a new dawn have long been forgotten. Contributions of some of them have come to be appreciated only in recent times. Around the turn of the century, the various struggles were coming together, creating a new consciousness.

When Gandhiji returned to the motherland in 1915, the nationalist fervour was gaining momentum. I have always strongly believed that no other country has been as fortunate as India in having a galaxy of leaders, each of whom was an exceptional mind, within a span of a few decades in the early twentieth century. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, like a modern-day 'rishi', was at work to help us find our cultural roots again, while Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar was vigorously advocating the cause of equality that was unheard of in most advanced countries. From Tilak and Gokhale to Bhagat Singh and Netaji, from Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee to Sarojini Naidu and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay – nowhere in the history of humankind have so many great minds come together for a common cause.

So many more names flash across my mind, but the point I wish to make is that a diverse range of great leaders with their diverse range of ideas for an Independent India had made huge sacrifices for the freedom movement. Gandhiji, of course, was the one whose transformative ideas influenced the outcome the most and who changed so many lives in the process.

The formal map for the democratic path we all have been navigating was drafted by the Constituent Assembly. It included great minds from across the country, including 15 remarkable women such as Hansaben Mehta, Durgabai Deshmukh, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Sucheta Kripalani. The Constitution they prepared, with invaluable

contributions from each of them, has been our guiding beacon. Values enshrined in it have been part of the Indian ethos since time immemorial.

In his concluding remarks in the Constituent Assembly before the Constitution was adopted, Dr. Ambedkar had pointed out the distinction between two kinds of democracy. He had said we must not be content with mere political democracy. I quote, “We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it, social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy.” [unquote]

Dear fellow citizens,

This trinity of ideals is lofty, noble and uplifting. They must not be mistaken for abstractions. Our history, not only of modern times but also from ancient times, reminds us that they are real; that they can be realized, and indeed have been realized in different eras. Our ancestors and founders of our modern nation exemplified the meaning of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity with hard work and an attitude of service. We only have to follow in their footsteps and keep walking.

And what do such ideals mean for a common citizen today? I believe the chief goal is to help them discover the joy of living. For that, first of all, their basic necessities must be taken care of. We have indeed come a long way from the days of shortages of resources. We are working with the objective of providing better housing, and access to drinking water and electricity for every family. This change has been made possible by the momentum of development and good governance which knows no discrimination.

Once the basic necessities are taken care of, the next requirement is to let each citizen pursue happiness by discovering their potential and

letting them do what they alone are destined to do. Here, education is the key. I believe the National Education Policy will go a long way in making it possible for young Indians to connect with their heritage and also find their feet in the twenty-first century. To let them flourish tomorrow, healthcare is essential. The pandemic has underlined the need to further improve the public healthcare infrastructure. I am glad that the Government has accorded top priority to this task. Once education and healthcare are in place, economic reforms will let citizens find the best course for their lives. I firmly believe that our country is getting equipped to make the 21st century, the century of India.

Dear citizens,

During the five years of my term, I have discharged my responsibilities to the best of my ability. I have been conscious of being a successor to great icons like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. When I entered the Rashtrapati Bhavan, my immediate predecessor, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, also shared his wise counsel with me about my duties. Still, whenever I was in doubt, I turned to Gandhiji and his famous talisman. His advice of recalling the face of the poorest man and asking myself if the step I am about to take will be of any use to him. At the risk of repeating myself, I will urge you to contemplate Gandhiji's life and teachings at least for a few minutes every day.

Dear fellow citizens,

Mother Nature is in deep agony and the climate crisis can endanger the very future of this planet. We must take care of our environment, our land, air and water, for the sake of our children. In our daily lives and routine choices, we must be more careful to protect our trees, rivers, seas and mountains as well as all other living beings. As the first citizen, if I have to give one advice to my fellow citizens, it has to be this.

At the conclusion of my address, I once again express my heartfelt gratitude to all my fellow citizens. My salutations to Mother India! And my best wishes to all of you for a very bright future.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!