

India is a place in which even taking birth is a matter of immense pride because India is not just a piece of land, India is not just a group of people, India is not just a geographical or political territory; India is an emotion, my emotion, your emotion. India is like the soul to our body.

भारत देश नहीं, हमारे प्राण हैं!

A very Happy Republic Day to each one of you. Certainly, not just the Republic Day, but each day in this Republic is special. But it is today that we remind ourselves of how great our motherland, our 'भारत माता' is, and derive inspiration from her to continue to work towards making our country better.

26th January, the day when 73 years ago, our countrymen sang and danced in delight because the sacred document, the Constitution of India had come into force, with the words Sovereign, Democratic, Republic, Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity engraved in its Preamble. It is a day to remind ourselves to uphold these precious constitutional values. It is a day to recall that march that Pandit Nehru took on the banks of River Ravi, hoisted the Tricolour flag and called for Poorna Swaraj. It is a day to celebrate our identity of being a 'भारतीय'.

My heart fills with pride when I look at all that my country has achieved. I am proud that my country is a growing space power with indigenous technology. I am proud that my country is a rising nuclear power that is committed to promoting world peace. I am proud to be a part of that country that has had leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji who during the 1971 war, assured Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that the opposition was standing with her. I am proud that my country has one of the youngest populations in the world. I am proud that my country is the world's largest Democratic Republic. I am proud to belong to a country that is in the midst of completing the world's largest inoculation drive. I am proud to belong to a country that was in ancient times, the fount of all wisdom.

I know that there is a long way to go, a lot of gaps to fill, a lot of challenges and issues faced by our nation. But can these issues stop us from realising our dreams as a country?

You ask the same question to that soldier fighting at a freezing -40°C in Siachen. Ask Hadi Rani, who chopped her head and placed it on a dish for her nation. Ask Panna Dhai, who sacrificed her own son for the future of her nation. Ask Shaheed Bhagat Singh, who delightfully embraced death for his country. Ask Chandrashekhar Azad, who shot himself but did not let the British even touch him. Ask Udham Singh who travelled all the way to London to avenge the atrocities committed by General Dyer on Indians. Ask the medical professionals. Ask the Covid warriors.

Ask all of these legends if there is any national challenge that is so difficult that we cannot face and overcome. You know the answer.

To conclude, I would like to quote a few lines written by Chandrashekhar Azad,

"जो अब तक ना खोला, वो खून नहीं पानी है |

जो देश के काम ना आये, वो बेकार जवानी है ||"