



LIFE CHANGING FREEDOMS

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LET'S TAKE A PLEDGE, INDIA



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bring about the change we want to see? Are we ready to work for the India we want?

A sense of pride fills our hearts when the national anthem is played and as the tricolour is unfurled. "I am proud of my country and I am proud to be an Indian" - we hear this twice a year without fail - on August 15th, and January 26th. Besides these two important dates, for most of us, there are a few other occasions when we feel a strong pride and patriotism for our motherland - perhaps during an Indo-Pak cricket match or while we watch a patriotic movie.

We also bubble with patriotism during a military strike or terror attack and equally admire the martyrs for their bravery. However, the famous quote "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country", is still ringing in our ears.

So, what are we doing as responsible citizens? Do we have the courage to step up and take responsibility, and

THE AIR OF FREEDOM

Many of us are loving the 'India Shining' experience. As citizens of this country, we all are happy to be breathing the air of freedom. But then all is not fine with our country. "Citizens identify communal tensions, lack of infrastructure, lack of basic civic sense, playing the blame game and the 'sab chalta hai' mindset as what is not right with India," rues senior citizen Narayan Shastri Reddy. We have a lot to work on.

Being progressive is key to moving forward. Software engineer Sandeep Konefi speaks for many when he says, "Doing your work honestly should be good enough and we must own up to our responsibilities as a citizen. The buck stops with us. It's time for the rhetoric to take a back seat

WHAT DOES INDEPENDENCE DAY MEAN TO US? AS INDIANS, WE ALL ARE HAPPY TO BE BREATHING THE AIR OF FREEDOM. BUT, ARE WE DOING ENOUGH AS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS?

and let actions speak for itself."

NO READY SOLUTIONS

On Independence Day, most of us would spend time watching television, go out for picnics, watch movies, visit a friend or treat it as another holiday. We all continue to go about our lives, taking many things for granted. How many of us spare a single thought for what we can do for our country?

Sure, our problems are many and

we have a few solutions readily available. But this Independence Day, each one of us can make a simple commitment for the betterment of our country - "As a citizen of free India, I cherish my Independence and this day will never lose its relevance for me. What's sad is that I feel we all are slowly losing touch with what Independence means to us, the cost at which our nation became free. We are losing track of our duties as citizens of free India,"

laments Vandana Baliga, Montessori teacher.

TIME FOR NEW ASPIRATIONS

We, the citizens of India who are enjoying this freedom, could unanimously celebrate Independence Day with new aspirations. This day reminds us of how important it is to walk together and motivate each other to fulfil our dreams. If our freedom fighters could do so ages back, then why can't we? We can bring about a change and we will because India is our country, our source of joy and pride.

Instead of leaving the onus of creating that country only on the government, this year, let us pledge to work towards nation building, even if it is a wee bit, ourselves. "You could start by supporting a campaign aimed for the betterment of India. This could be by helping an NGO working towards women and children or supporting a social activist if you believe in the ide-

ologies or even towards the benefit of stray animals; just chose a cause you most believe in," says S Nandagopal, convener of Centre for Integrated Learning.

And if this too is something you can't relate to, perhaps you could simply begin by avoiding littering. For the past 10 years, Rashmi Jain, a homemaker, donates clothes and groceries to old age homes and schools for underprivileged on every Independence Day and Republic Day and during New Year and festive occasions. "I take my children every year to slums and distribute the Tricolour to the kids there and teach them patriotic songs, which imbibe a patriotic spirit in them," says Rashmi. Let us teach our youngsters about the importance of Independence and share with them how we attained our freedom, participate in the flag hoisting ceremony and get to know and appreciate the freedoms we enjoy, she says.

— Rekha Kavoor

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IRRUM MANZIL	Live Concert (6pm onwards)	15th August
PUNJAGUTTA	Live Concert (6pm onwards)	15th August

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