

THEME: BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE NATION

Building Blocks are symbolic of the elementary yet essential basis-the foundation for the growth of a nation.

Built over the course of our history, they are representative of our 'Indian ness; thus every Indian has a contributory role.

The past provides strength and inspiration to mould our hopes and dreams-the blocks of the future. A multitude of factors merge to form the building blocks: from technological marvels....to the lifestyle of the poorest.

1947-1997-a euphoria celebration of the Golden jubilee of India's Independence. We've come a long way; and as we go on, we as a Nation must stop to think and determine the direction of our progress.

INDIA REMEMBERS....

...The Non Violence Movement Drawing on a variety of sources-including Hinduism, Christianity, the works of the American philosopher-writer, Henry David Thoreau and the Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, Gandhiji evolved the philosophy of Non-Violence movement. An unprecedented battle based on non-cooperation and passive resistance won India's Independence and world-wide acclaim.

A leading light

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi hailed as the Mahatma (great soul) and the 'Father of the Nation' was born on the 2nd of October 1869 to Karamchand and Putlibai in Porbandar, Gujrat.

His career as a lawyer never took off in India, and so he left for S.Africa in 1893 to become a lawyer for an Indian firm.

His first Satyagraha Campaign was organized in 1906 against the proposed Asiatic Ordinance directed against Indian immigrants in Transvaal, S. Africa. That was the first stone-preceding the struggle for India's Independence.

The pursuit of Truth was a lifelong objective. Non-Violence and self-discipline were the tools towards this end.

Freedom at Midnight

Independence day has become synonymous with the unfurling of the Tricolour. Yet, on that historic first independence day, no Prime Minister unfurled the Indian flag. Astrologers predicted doom for a nation born on a Friday, which was the 15th of August 1947. Nehru, suggested the 14th midnight-by the Indian calendar it was still Thursday. Nonetheless, it was a night to remember. Pure expressions of joy burst forth as people danced on the streets.

Few of us are familiar with the name of the First President of free INDIA:

Chaudhari Khaliqazzman. He left later for Pakistan and Dr. S.Radhakrishnan became the Second President of Independent India.

A Resilient Democracy:

Democracy in India has survived against the odds of poverty and illiteracy.

The "Government of the people" is traced back to ancient Athens, where, unlike other kingdoms ruled by a monarch, had a special governing council representing even the humble farmer.

Smaller nations might make better motor cars and nail clippers and Olympic medalists, but we preserve and practice freedom that can be enjoyed by many.

The week, August 1996.

Voice on the Future

Hope and optimism resounded in the voices of a better India, development, and dreams come true.

Rajesh Tripathy is a systems analyst working for Tata Consultancy Services. His return from the USA to work in India is testimony to the future he foresees in our country.

Notwithstanding the scams and cynicism, he believes it would be incorrect to renounce India. "We still have a very diligent press and a fairly independent and assertive judiciary which to a large extent guarantees that corruption and misrule are brought to book". In the context of the recent economic reform, he says. "The advent of the market driven economy following liberalization has resulted in a marked improvement in the supply and quality of product and services.

We are waking up and taking note of the issues that affect our life and country. This can only lead to a better India".

Shoma Chakraborty, a student of Political Science at Lady Shriram College, Delhi, voices the concerns of the youth. "As an educated teenager living in a metropolis, I have seen more of a polluted, overpopulated India; where narrow mindedness and corruption are widely prevalent". Overriding these evils, she feels India has much strength, "the strong ties of family relationships, the warmth of the Indian people and the beauty and diversity of our natural geography and our pride".

Shoma, along with many other youngsters, see India, in the years ahead, as a land of widening opportunities.

Sonu and Meena, aged 8 and 11 belong to the underprivileged sections of society. Studying at the local Corporation School in Mahipalpur village, they both foresee a bright future for themselves in India. "I don't want to be like my mother working in other people's homes. I am going to be a teacher when I grow up," says Meena. "I am going to be a police officer and I will reform all these bad characters who live around me", says Sonu.

The zeal and conviction which Sonu and Meena hold and more so their commitment to serve society meaningfully is commendable. Let us hope their young dreams bear fruit and be the fulfillment of Gandhiji's dream, "I dream of an India in which the poorest shall feel it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice".

"Do not ask what America has done for you, but ask what you have done for America".

(John F.Kennedy)

