

# Tryst with Destiny

*Jawaharlal Nehru*

## A. Lead-in :

The Indian independence in 1947 marked a turning- point in the history of South Asia. The independent nation's first few years were eventful: the traumas of Partition and of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi made the people sad. But Indians had a pledge to fulfil: they had to build a progressive, prosperous and democratic nation by setting up administrative, legislative and judiciary systems and establishing an infrastructure for industry and agriculture. The present piece is the full text of the speech Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime minister of India, delivered in the Constituent Assembly on the midnight of August 14 -15, 1947.

## B. Text :

Long years ago we made a **tryst** with **destiny**, and now the time comes when we shall **redeem** our **pledge**, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the **stroke** of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds **utterance**. It is fitting that at this **solemn** moment, we take the pledge of **dedication** to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

At the dawn of history, India started on her unending **quest**, and **trackless** centuries are filled with her **striving** and **grandeur** of her success and failures. Through good and ill fortune alike, she has never lost sight of that quest, forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of misfortunes and India discovers herself again. The **achievement** we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity to

the greater **triumphs** and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Freedom and power bring responsibility. The responsibility rests upon this **Assembly**, a **sovereign** body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom, we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. **Nevertheless**, the past is over and it is the future that **beckons** us now.

That future is not one of ease or resting but of **incessant** striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the **greatest man of our generation** has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

And so we have to labour and to work, and to work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace is said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make an appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill-will or blaming others. We have to build the noble **mansion** of free India where all her children may dwell.

The **appointed** day has come – the day appointed by destiny– and India stands forth again, after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent. The past **clings** on to us still in some measure and we have to do much before we redeem the pledges we have so often taken. Yet the turning-point is past, and history begins anew for us, the history which we shall live and act and others will write about.

It is a **fateful** moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. **A new star rises**, the star of freedom in the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished **materializes**. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed!

We rejoice in that freedom, even though **clouds** surround us, and many of our people are sorrow-stricken and difficult problems **encompass** us. But freedom brings responsibilities and burdens and we have to face them in the spirit of a free and disciplined people.

On this day our first thoughts go to the **architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation**, who, **embodying** the old spirit of India held **aloft the torch of freedom** and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us. We have often been unworthy followers of his and have **strayed** from his message, but not only we but succeeding generations will remember this message and bear the **imprint** in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength and courage and humility. We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out, however high the wind or stormy the **tempest**.

Our next thoughts must be of the unknown volunteers and soldiers of freedom who, without praise or reward, have served India even unto death.

We think also of our **brothers and sisters** who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen, and we shall be sharers in their good or ill fortune alike.

The future beckons to us. Whether do we go and what shall be our **endeavour**? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.

We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be. We are citizens of a great country on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to

that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage **communalism** or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action.

To the nations and peoples of the world we send greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering peace, freedom and democracy. And to India, our much-loved motherland, the ancient, the eternal and the ever-new, we pay our reverent homage and we bind ourselves afresh to her service.

JAI HIND!

### **C. About the Author :**

One of the foremost leaders of Indian freedom struggle and the first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru was born to Swaroop Rani (1863–1954) and Motilal Nehru (1861–1931) in a Kashmiri Pandit family in Allahabad on November 14, 1889. He was educated at Harrow Public School, London and Trinity College, Cambridge.

Nehru played a key role in building modern India. He effectively coped with the formidable challenges the country faced: the disorder and mass exodus of people across the new borders, establishment of a political and administrative infrastructure and shaping India's foreign policy. He died of a heart attack on May 27, 1964.

Nehru was a prolific writer in English, and he wrote a number of books such as *The Discovery of India*, *Glimpses of World History*, and an autobiography, *Toward Freedom*.

### **D. Notes and glossary :**

tryst	:	meeting
destiny	:	fate
redeem	:	fulfil or carry out; get back; restore; cash in
pledge	:	promise; vow
stroke	:	knock
solemn	:	serious
dedication	:	commitment; devotion; allegiance
quest	:	search

trackless	:	pathless
striving	:	determined effort
grandeur	:	splendour; magnificence
triumph	:	victory; achievement
achievement	:	attainment; success
Assembly	:	Constituent Assembly of India
sovereign	:	supreme
nevertheless	:	all the same; yet
beckon	:	signal; gesture
incessant	:	unending
greatest man of our generation	:	Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)
cling	:	adhere; stick
fateful	:	momentous; significant; crucial
a new star rises	:	the star of freedom from colonial rule
materializes	:	happens; becomes a reality
clouds	:	troubles; difficulties
encompass	:	cover; surround
architect...Nation:	:	Mahatma Gandhi(1869-1948)
embodying	:	representing; symbolizing; personifying
aloft	:	up
the torch of freedom:	:	freedom as a torch that lights up the darkness of bondage
stray	:	wander away, lose one's path
imprint	:	impression
tempest	:	storm
our brothers and sisters	:	people of Pakistan
endeavour	:	effort
communalism	:	religious fanaticism

**E. Let's Understand the text :**

1. What is the pledge that we shall redeem?
2. What does Nehru mean when he says that India will awake to life and freedom?
3. What is the moment that comes rarely in history?
4. What, according to Nehru, is India's unending quest?
5. How do we end a period of misfortunes?
6. What does Nehru mean by challenge of the future?
7. What responsibility does Nehru speak of? Upon whom does it rest?
8. What does Nehru mean by the rising of a new star?
9. In what spirit should the people of India take their freedom?
10. Which aspects of Gandhiji's character appeal to Nehru?
11. What are Nehru's thoughts about the people on the other side of the border?
12. What should the Indians aim at after the attainment of freedom?
13. What does Nehru mean when he says that we have hard work ahead of us?
14. How can we co-operate with the nations and peoples?
15. What is our duty to our motherland?

**F. Let's go beyond the text :**

1. What are the greater triumphs and achievements that still await us ?
2. Has the dream of wiping tears from every eye been fulfilled ?
3. Why have the dreams remained unfulfilled?
4. What are the clouds that still surround us ?
5. What are the distinguishing features of a progressive nation ?

**G. Let's learn some words:**

- 1 Match the words in Column A with those having the same meaning in Column B:

**Column A**

redeem

pledge

sovereign

fateful

embody

**Column B**

crucial

promise

fulfil

symbolize

supreme

2. Find verbs of the following nouns and use them in sentences of your own:  
utterance; dedication; achievement; embodiment; cloud
3. Rewrite the following sentences using the words from the passage in place of the word or words in bold type:
- (a) The decision taken by Kamala was **very important**.
  - (b) My parents **derived great pleasure** from my success in the examination.
  - (c) The volunteers tried to help the flood-affected people who were **overcome by sorrow**.
  - (d) We should not **deviate** from Gandhiji's message.
  - (e) I was struck by the **modesty** of the boy.
4. Use the following expressions in sentences:
- (a) take a pledge
  - (b) rest upon
  - (c) as long as
  - (d) blow out
  - (e) cut off

#### **H. Let's learn language:**

- 1 Mark the use of **when/ where/ who** in the following sentences. These sentences have, beside a principal clause, an adverb or adjective clause.
- (a) At the stroke of the midnight hour, **when** the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.
  - (b) We have to build the noble mansion of free India **where** all her children may dwell.
  - (c) We think of our brothers and sisters, **who** have been cut off from us by political boundaries.

Join the following pairs of sentences using an adverb/ adjective clause.

- (a) The headmaster gave the girl a certificate. The girl had saved the life of a child.
- (b) My father bought an apartment. We shall stay there.
- (c) The boy met me in the library. I was waiting for him there.
- (d) My uncle returned home at midnight. I was sleeping then.
- (e) He is the tourist. You had met him at Konark.

2. Read the sentences below :

Peace is said to be indivisible.

Mark the word underlined. The word 'indivisible' has been derived by adding the prefix 'in' to the word 'divisible'. Here the prefix 'in' indicates a negative meaning. Similar prefixes used for negative meaning are 'im' 'un', 'il', 'dis', 'ir'.

Now add the appropriate prefixes to the words given in the table below to get the derived words.

Prefixes	Words	Derived words
dis	measurable	_____
il	qualify	_____
im	ending	_____
in	legal	_____
un	honest	_____
ir	inform	_____
mis	responsible	_____
	continue	_____
	logical	_____
	equality	_____
	relevant	_____
	material	_____
	dependent	_____
	fortunate	_____

**I. Let's listen and speak :**

- The class is divided into four or five groups.
- Each group is asked to locate a problem that India still suffers from and suggest measures to overcome it. The members in each group discuss among themselves and prepare a note.
- Each group presents its viewpoints and others offer suggestions.
- The teacher facilitates and co-ordinates the whole process.

**J. Let's write :**

Each student is asked to select any one of the problems discussed in the class (problem, status, causes and suggestions to overcome it) and prepare a write-up.

