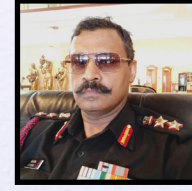


Independence and Responsibility of Youth



Col. O.P. Misra

Independence means different things to different people in different circumstances. Hence, to better understand the concept, there is need to come on the same page before we discussed it in perspective of youth of India.

The word independence is actually opposite of dependence which means not being dependent on others for anything is independence. Similarly in Hindi it is called Swatantra which is opposite of par-tantra. These words are made by combination of two words that is swa+tantra and par+tantra which means that we are talking of a tantra i.e., system which maybe own (swa) or paraya/dusron ka. So when we switch over from the system of others to our own we can call ourselves to be swatantra or independent.

On 15th August 1947 India achieved independence from the British - but could we eliminate our dependence? Did we really become independent? Theoretically and technically we came out of the system of our rulers (per- tantra). But could we establish our own system (Swatantra)? Have we been able to develop and establish our own indigenous, fully operative system of governance with accompanying rules and regulations? Sit back for a few seconds and think - are we being governed by our own rules & regulations, Acts and philosophy? More than 75 years have passed since the British left our land, but aren't they still ruling us through their Acts and regulations which date back between 100 to 200 years? How astonishing! Some of these Acts still address "Her Majesty" or "East India Company" and we have not had the inclination or time to change them to our times and requirements! Recently, law ministry has listed about 203 laws which are about or more than 100 years old. First few Acts date back to 1773. The later ones came to be called Government of India Act. Going by these Acts, are we not doing many illegal actions in our day to day life? For example, the business of courier service is illegal as per Post Office Act of 1898 since management of post was responsibility of the government. We still have the Ganges Tolls Act of 1867 which levies 12 annas of tax on a boat travelling from Allahabad to Patna. We are also governed by Indian Treasure and Trove Act of 1878 with says that any treasure worth more than rupees 10 is the property of the Government. It must be reported and deposited in

treasury to avoid penalty and punishment. Additionally, our Indian Penal Code 1860 and the Criminal Procedure Code 1898, and Indian Evidence Act 1872 were all made by British and our entire justice system is still being governed by the British. To add insult to injury, our Civil Administration, which practically governs our country, was established by our rulers with the basic premise to exercise control over the slaves or subjects of the British Empire. The training, ethos and mindset of our administrators, who are supposed to be 'Civil Servants', is still the same as that of the rulers. If we observe carefully it would be glaringly obvious why our common man is common till date and suffers constantly at the hands of the neo rulers of India. Hence, to imagine that we have become independent or Swatantra is only in theory.

This would naturally spur one to ask as to what did we gain on 15th August 1947? The answer is that on that day we achieved geographical and political independence from our colonial rulers so that we could exercise sovereignty within the physical borders of our country. Adoption of a constitution on 26 January 1950 further cemented this authority. However, establishing and adopting our own system (Swa-tantra), gulami ki mansikta se Azadi, that is transition from slavery to being own rulers or the journey from being dependent on others to achieving independence is on. It is a matter of consolation and happiness that present government has recognized the need for this transition. Though some work has already been done by way of repealing redundant laws and replacing still others, certainly steps in right direction, our judiciary and administration are yet to be Indianised.

Since independence had been achieved on 15th August 1947 after paying heavy cost, it is our solemn responsibility to maintain it too. Maintenance of Azadi or independence is a very costly affair as it demands blood, sweat and money. Cost in terms of blood is being paid for by our soldiers every day, both on the borders as well as during internal security duties; cost in terms of sweat is being paid by your farmers and labourers; and payment in terms of money is being done by each one of us in terms of our contribution in GDP and taxes. So now the question is: what is the role and responsibility of our youth to this end?

Youth in India are a lucky generation who have the advantage of seeing the past through the eyes of their parents and grandparents and are blessed to be living in modern times, they are free to live their lives in global village scenario where even sky is not the limit. It is because of this beautiful mix of old and new that this generation of youth has the sensitivity towards the past and hope for the future. This indicates towards a very bright future for mother-India. It is incumbent upon them to carry the baton from here, be ready for surmounting any hurdles/difficulties in the way of progress of the country. They have to make this nation strong by making positive changes in administration, judiciary and governance system so that the common man

of India can identify himself/herself as a global citizen, capable of leading this universe in the century to come.

The generation that is growing up in the colleges and gearing up to take to the skies and steer this country in near future is often seen as rebel, anti-establishment and against any kind of control or restrictions imposed on them. This I see as an effect of being born and brought up in a country that attained independence some 75 years ago and this generation has only seen freedom. As a result, any kind of restrictions or limitations by parents, elders, instructors and peers is not taken kindly which can be termed as natural fallout of freedom/independence/Azadi which is now an ingredient of their blood. Elders should accept it with maturity and the young ones should see these restrictions or guiding directions similar to a parachute which retards your motion, reduces your thrill and increases your time taken to hit your goal, but, at the same time it makes reaching the destination safe and keeps you alive to accomplish your mission. It can also be understood by the example of a kite which rises when pulled and goes down if too much of slackness is allowed. Imagine if this restricting and controlling thread snaps altogether then the kite has no future except meeting a dreadful end, most of the time.

So we can conclude that though our country has gained Azadi long time back but becoming independent and developing Swa-tantra i.e., own system of running the country is still underway. We are not fully there yet, even after more than 75 years later. Thankfully, youth of present day and of immediate future are full of hope, abilities and enthusiasm to take this country to the top of the world. A very bright future is peeking through the horizon to be grabbed and hugged with passion, caution and determination.

Jai Hind

About the Author

Col OP Misra is a second generation Army officer. He is a direct commissioned officer who has retired after 34 glorious years of service in the Artillery branch of the army.

He is a graduate from Lucknow University, a post graduate of University of Madras, MBA from MDU Rohtak, undergone a management course with distinction from Amity University, Noida. He is an alumni of the prestigious Staff College, Wellington. He has the distinction of raising an Artillery unit to existence, as it's first Commanding Officer - apart from commanding 3 NCC units too. He has served at Army HQs in the Military Intelligence wing and a Divisional HQs too.

The officer has the honour and pride of participating in all major operations of the Indian Army including IPKF in Sri Lanka, High Altitude tenures in Arunachal Pradesh, and J&K, and fighting terrorism in Assam, Punjab, Nagaland and J&K.

Col Misra got decorated with Mention in Dispatches for gallantry during Kargil war for his fearless actions on Tiger Hill. Presently he is in charge of soldiers' welfare and rehabilitation in a district of Uttar Pradesh. He is also an accomplished motivational speaker and constantly participates in TV discussions.