

Dear Teachers, Parents and Students,

Independence Day reminds us the historic day when our nation received its freedom from the British Rule. Many of us do not have a direct experience of the British Rule and perhaps given a chance we may not wish to be ruled by the British or for that matter by any other country. We are proud to be the citizens of Independent India where we have freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly, freedom to form associations, freedom of movement, freedom to reside and to settle and freedom of profession. Let us not forget that the achievement of freedom preceded a long period of struggle in which the prominent leaders had to face imprisonment and many brave heart fighters had to sacrifice their lives for the nation. The long period of struggle and loss of many lives ultimately led to victory.

So, today we rejoice over the victory of our nation while still we are waiting for the victory over Covid-19 pandemic. The year 2020 has been the "Rule of Coronavirus". To a certain extent it has given us an experience of what had been the British Rule. As the lockdown began on 22nd of March 2020, a great fear and anxiety seized the nation. Many of our own brothers, sisters, friends and relatives were held up in abroad and in various parts of the country as well. Soon, a very pathetic, traumatic and heart touching situation was created. There were no means of transportation to travel back home. Many migrant labourers walked on foot for days and weeks from cities to their homes. They suffered physical and mental stress with no food, no water, no shelter and no medical care. They had only one aim to be at home with their dear ones. Unfortunately, many could not reach home and lost their lives on their excruciating journey. Others who neared their homes were kept in quarantines for at least fourteen days. It was an experience of imprisonment not for any crime but for the safety of the people and the nation.

During the Lockdown period and even after, perhaps most of us feel as if our freedom has been curtailed. We are forced to remain at home, we cannot move around freely, children cannot play with other children; students cannot go to schools and colleges. We even cannot breath freely since we have to cover our mouth and nose with masks; we have to keep a social distance, we have to sanitize our hands frequently, we cannot gather together for worship, we cannot attend marriage and funeral celebrations in big numbers, we cannot meet friends and relatives freely. All these rules tell us that we are not as free as we should be. So, on Independence Day, how do we understand the meaning of freedom? Perhaps, Coronavirus has brought a deeper sense of freedom for us. We have to practice freedom with greater responsibility. First of all, we are responsible for our own safety and security which follows being responsible for the safety of others and the safety of nation. Coronavirus has not taken away our freedom. In fact no one can take away our freedom; freedom is God given, it is something we are born with. We need to learn to adjust with new way of living and become proactive agents and responsible citizens for a better human society. Denis Waitley says: "The greatest gifts you can give your children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence."