

Do or Die (Mahatma Gandhi)

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Abstract

The speech pertains to the period of freedom movement but the impact left by the speech and the personality on the common men is not only deep but very effective and inspiring. So that after reading the viewpoint, the young generation of the country will be able to help in the construction of the state / country. The speech definitely is of high morale, high character and tell vividly about the personality who was not only dedicated to the cause of liberation of the country rather he was a balanced person and studied the conditions of the country and convinced the common men that they would not be able to get their due without following their leaders. The speech forced the common men to follow the track shown by him and involve themselves in the long struggle of freedom. Therefore, the speech is everlasting and full of lesson for the all troops of people.

Keywords

1. *Mantra – Golden rule.*
2. *Zamindars – A landowner, especially one who leases his land to tenant farmers.*
Brahmachari – Virtuous lifestyle

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This speech was given by Mahatma Gandhi at the Congress Committee meeting, on August 8, 1942 at Mumbai. The decision to start Quit India movement was taken at this meeting.

Nevertheless, the actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks. What would you do in the meanwhile? What is the programme, for the interval, in which all can participate? As you know the spinning wheel is the first thing that occurs to me. I made the same answer to the Maulana. He would have none of it, though he understood its import later. The fourteen fold constructive programme is, of course, there for you to carry out. What more should you do? I will tell you. Every one of you should, from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this imperialism.

It is not a make-believe that I am suggesting to you. It is very essence of freedom. The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he consider himself to be a free being. He will, plainly tell the master: 'I was your bond slave till this moment, but I am a slave no longer. You may kill me if you like, but if you keep me alive, I wish to tell you that if you release me from the bondage of your own accord, I will ask for nothing more from you. You used to feed and clothe me, though I could have provided food and clothing for myself by my labor. I hitherto depended on you instead of on God, for food and raiment. God has now inspired me with an urge for freedom and I am today a free and will no longer depend on you.'

You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the viceroy for ministries and like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. Maybe, he will propose the abolition of salt tax, the drink evil, etc. But I will say 'Nothing less than freedom.'

Here is a mantra, a short one that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is: 'Do or Die.' We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or [Congress] women will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge.

Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keeps me free, I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails. I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time when it is in trouble. Let every man

and women live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die ,if need be,to attain that goal.

Take a pledge with god and your own conscience as witness,that you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the attempt to achieve it.He who loses his life will gain it;he who will seek to save it shall lose it.Freedom is not for the coward or the faint hearted.

A word to the journalists.I congratulate you on the support you have hitherto given to the national demand.I know the restrictions and handicaps under which you have to labor.But I would not ask you to snap the chains that bind you.It should be the proud privilege of the newspapers to lead and set example in laying down one's life for freedom.

It is my duty to warn Princes that if they will act while I am still alive,the Princes may come to occupy an honorable place in free India. In Jawaharlal's scheme of free India,no privileges or the privileged classes have a place.Jawaharlal considers all property to be state-owned. He wants planned economy. He wants to reconstruct India according to plan.He likes to fly;I do not.I have kept a place for the Princes and the *zamindars* in India that I envisage.I would ask the Princes in all humility to enjoy through renunciation.The princes may renounce ownership over their properties and become their trustees in the true sense of the term.I visualize God in the assemblage of people.The Princes may say to their people:' you are the owners and masters of state and we are your servants.'

Nothing, however,should be done secretly.This is an open rebellion.In this struggle secrecy is a sin.A free man would not engage in a secret movement.It is likely that when you gain freedom you will have a C.I.D. of your own,in spite of my advice to the contrary.But in the present struggle,we have to work openly and to receive the bullets on our chest,without taking to heels.

I have a word to say to the Government servants also.They may not,if they like, resign their posts yet.The late justice Ranade did not resign his post,but he openly declared that he belonged to the Congress.I would ask all the government servants to follow in the footsteps of Ranade and to declare their allegiance to the congress as an answer to the secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle.

Soldiers too are covered by the present programme.I do not ask them just now to resign their posts and leave the army.Soldiers come to me,Jawaharlal and to the Maulana and say:"We are wholly with you .We are tired of the governmental tyranny." To these soldiers I would say: "You may say to the government, 'our hearts are with

the Congress. We are not going to leave our posts. We will serve you so long as we receive your salaries. We will obey your just orders, but will refuse to fire on our own people.”

If the students want to join the struggle only to go back to their studies after a while, I would not invite them to it. For the present, however, till the time that I frame a programme for the struggle, I would ask the students to say to their professors: ‘we belong to the congress. Do you belong to the congress or to the government? If you belong to the Congress, you need not vacate your posts. You will remain at your posts but teach us and lead us unto freedom.’ In all fights for freedom, the world over, the students have very large contributions.

For the last twenty year, I have controlled my speech and pen and have stored up my energy. He is a true *brahmachari* who does not fritter away his energy. He will, therefore, always control his speech. That has been my conscious effort all these year. But today the occasion has come when I had to unburden my heart before you. I have done so, even though it meant putting a strain on your patience; and I do not regret having done it. I have given you my message and through you I have delivered it to the whole of India.

The movement was an important landmark in India’s struggle for freedom. The movement was symbolic of a new confidence that the people had attained. It wanted the British that they were not wanted in India. It aroused among people a spirit of total sacrifice. There was nothing to stop Indians from attaining their freedom. It was just a matter of time. The movement hastened the British decision to quit India. In the history of British rule in India, no such revolt had occurred earlier. The youngest of the generations, the youths and the older generation of experienced politicians, they all had joined in struggle for independence. In this revolt, the Indian revolution reached its climax.

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