

Forging a new India – US engagement

Asia Society Leadership Award

Acceptance speech by

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Asia
Society

Washington Center

Senator Hillary Clinton,
President Vishakha Desai,
Chairman Leo Daly,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good evening.

I have great pleasure in receiving the Asia Society Leadership Award.

Thank you President Vishakha Desai, Chairman Leo Daly and Mr. Joseph Snyder for the honour.

I feel specially privileged because of the presence of Senator Hillary Clinton.

Senator, you have been an ardent advocate of American engagement with Asia.

Your visits to India, since 1995, have infused great warmth in our ties.

This evening's event is devoted to India.

Your presence reinforces our optimism about the future of India – US relations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

India has experienced an electoral hurricane in recent weeks.

But the roots of Indian democracy are very strong.

The transition from one coalition government to another merely signifies orderly transition.

The Indian voter has delivered a simple, but profound message. Do not take me for granted. I am the sovereign.

They have humbled pollsters, psephologists, and political pundits.

Let me assure you, that it is not a rejection of the policy of economic reforms.

It is true that the Indian communists are supporting this Congress-led coalition government. My American friends need not panic because of it.

You have dealt with Chinese communists successfully.

Their Indian counterparts are equally pragmatic.

I see continuity of policy on two issues:

The government led by Manmohan Singh will not reverse the process of economic reforms.

Of course, some adjustments will be made to reassure the poor.

That the reforms are designed to improve the quality of their lives. Not merely to serve the interests of the rich.

On Foreign Policy, there is a national consensus in our country.

I am convinced that India – US relations will continue to deepen.

And, the initiatives for establishing peace with Pakistan will continue to receive support from across the political divide.

Friends,

India is undergoing a transformation of unprecedented proportions.

A whole new generation of young Indians are breaking new grounds.

They are undaunted by the baggage of the past.

They are reaching out, to explore and engage with the world: in education, exports, enterprise, excursions and even entertainment.

Because of them, today's India bears all the hallmarks of a resurgent nation.

I speak to you on behalf of that India.

America has begun to recognise this dynamic, vibrant India.

The honour you have bestowed on me proves this eloquently.

It also reflects your readiness to engage that India.

I see a strong synergy between this forward-looking India and the United States.

India today is driven by soaring aspirations and irrepressible ambitions.

America is a land of promise and performance.

It is time the two come together in a grand partnership.

I am a businessman.

I can assure you both will profit from it.

This is a win-win partnership.

It will create unprecedented economic opportunities for Indian people.

It will also help the US grapple with some of its pressing problems.

This partnership can weave together two biggest challenges facing humanity.

These are: concerns for safety and security; and desire for prosperity and well-being.

In fact, these are two sides of the same coin.

India and America can work together over a wide canvas.

From the war against terrorism to harnessing technology for the good of the people.

All this is not merely sentimental platitude.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today there are several concrete opportunities for a India – US engagement.

These opportunities go beyond information technology and outsourcing of services.

They extend to health, university education and scientific research.

I believe these are areas of fundamental importance to our societies.

A India – US partnership can successfully address several crucial health issues:

- like, lowering the cost of health care in the US,
- like, improving availability of professional resources,
- like, conducting fast track clinical trials and discovering new drug molecules.

Friends,

Indians think that Americans do not understand their structural problems.

Americans become impatient that India does not move fast enough.

I suggest, we put behind us this inherited habit of mutual recrimination.

I suggest we begin to think together.

It is in this spirit that I propose a *Grand India – US alliance* to address the problems of the world.

I propose a comprehensive, creative and constructive partnership between our two countries.

This will not only serve the vital interests of India and the United States.

It will also help tackle some of the major challenges across the globe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 21st century will witness two fiercely fought wars.

The war for better life and the war for talent.

The have-nots will fight one.

The haves will fight the other.

The two are intertwined.

United States and India can help each other in winning this war.

The US can be India's partner in giving a better life to our have-nots.

India can be America's partner in meeting your need for professional resources; in winning the war for talent.

A constructive, comprehensive, creative India – US partnership will help us win both the wars.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I conclude, allow me to leave a thought with you.

Someone described India as a land of a billion problems.

I believe India is a land of a billion opportunities.

We can leverage a billion Indian opportunities for the benefit of both our countries.

And, in the process, make this world a better place.

I see Asia Society and you, Senator, as a powerful ally in this project.

Because the Asia Society has endeavoured to engrave the essence of Asia in the ethos of America.

With these words, I am pleased to accept the Asia Society Leadership Award.

I accept the award on behalf of Dhirubhai Ambani, Founder of Reliance Industries Ltd.

He was a son of a schoolteacher in a remote village in India. Beginning literally from scratch, he built Reliance, India's largest corporation.

He demonstrated that ideas can transform dreams into reality.

I accept this award on behalf of thousands of young professionals who have made Reliance a world-class enterprise.

They are eloquent symbols of India's vast potential.

I accept this award on behalf of a Resurgent Democratic India, moving ahead with confidence.

And I do so for a 'Grand India – US alliance' for a safe and prosperous world.

Thank you.

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