

India-USA partnership augurs well for the democracy: Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the US Congress

June 23, 2023



Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mister Speaker, Madam Vice President, Distinguished Members of the US Congress, Ladies and Gentlemen, Namaskar!

It is always a great honor to address the United States Congress. It is an exceptional privilege to do so twice. For this honor, I extend my deepest gratitude on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India. I see that nearly half of you were here in 2016. I feel your warmth as old friends. I can also see the enthusiasm for a new friendship in the other half. I remember Senator Harry Reid, Senator John McCain, Senator Orrin Hatch, Elijah Cummings, Alcee Hastings, and others, whom I met here in 2016, and who are sadly no longer with us.

Standing here, seven Junes ago, that June when Hamilton swept all the awards, I said that the hesitations of history were behind us. Now, when our era is at a crossroads, I am here to speak about our calling for this century. Through the long

and winding road that we have traveled, we have met the test of friendship. A lot has changed since I came here seven summers ago. But a lot has remained the same – like our commitment to deepen the friendship between India and the United States. In the past few years, there have been many advances in AI – Artificial Intelligence. At the same time, there have been even more momentous developments in another AI – America, and India.

The beauty of democracy is the constant connect with the people, to listen to them, and feel their pulse. And I know this takes a lot of time, energy, effort, and travel. Being a citizen of a vibrant democracy myself, I can admit one thing Mister Speaker – you have a tough job! I can relate to the battles of passion, persuasion, and policy. I can understand the debate of ideas and ideology. But I am delighted to see you come together today to celebrate the bond between the world's two great democracies – India and the United States. I am happy to help out whenever you need a strong bipartisan consensus. There will be – and there must be – a contest of ideas at home. But, we must also come together as one when we speak for our nation. And, you have shown that you can do it. Congratulations!

A lot has changed since I came here seven summers ago. But a lot has remained the same – like our commitment to deepen the friendship between India and the United States.

The foundation of America was inspired by the vision of a nation of equal people. Throughout your history, you have embraced people from around the world. And you have made them equal partners in the American dream. There are millions here who have roots in India. Some of them sit proudly in this chamber. There is one behind me who has made history! I am told that the Samosa Caucus is now the flavor of the House. I hope it grows and brings the full diversity of Indian cuisine here. Over two centuries, we have inspired each other through the lives of great Americans and Indians. We pay tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Junior. We also remember many others who worked for liberty, equality, and justice. Today, I also wish to pay a heartfelt tribute to one of them – Congressman John Lewis.

Democracy is one of our sacred and shared values. It has evolved over a long time,

and taken various forms and systems. Throughout history, however, one thing has been clear.

Democracy is the spirit that supports equality and dignity. Democracy is the idea that welcomes debate and discourse. Democracy is the culture that gives wings to thought and expression. India is blessed to have such values from times immemorial. In the evolution of the democratic spirit, India is the Mother of Democracy. Millennia ago, our oldest scriptures said, 'The brahmins speak of one truth in many ways.' It means – the truth is one but the wise express it in different ways. Now, the US is the oldest and India the largest democracy. Our partnership augurs well for the future of democracy. Together, we shall give a better future to the world, and a better world to the future.

Last year, India celebrated 75 years of its independence. Every milestone is important, but this one was special. We celebrated a remarkable journey of over 75 years of freedom, after a thousand years of foreign rule in one form or another. This was not just a celebration of democracy, but also of diversity. Not just of Constitution, but also of its spirit of social empowerment. Not just of our competitive and cooperative federalism, but also of our essential unity and integrity.

We have over two thousand five hundred political parties. Yes, you heard that right – two thousand five hundred. About twenty different parties govern various states of India. We have twenty-two official languages and thousands of dialects, and yet, we speak in one voice. Every hundred miles, our cuisine changes. From Dosa to Aloo Paratha and from Srikhand to Sandesh. We enjoy all of these. We are home to all faiths in the world, and we celebrate all of them. In India, diversity is a natural way of life.

Today, the world wants to know more and more about India. I see that curiosity in this House too. We were honored to receive over hundred Members of the US Congress in India over the last decade. Everyone wants to understand India's development, democracy and diversity. Everyone wants to know what India is doing right and how. Among close friends, I am happy to share the same.

When I first visited the US as Prime Minister, India was the tenth-largest economy in the world. Today, India is the fifth largest economy. And India will be the third-largest economy soon. We are not only growing bigger, but we are also growing faster. When India grows, the whole world grows. After all, we are one-sixth of the world's population! In the last century, when India won its freedom, it inspired many

other countries to free themselves from colonial rule.

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In this century, when India sets benchmarks in growth, it will inspire many other countries to do the same. Our vision is ‘Everyone’s support, everyone’s development, everyone’s trust’. It means: Together, for everyone’s growth, with everyone’s trust and everyone’s efforts.

Let me share with you how this vision is translating into action, with speed and scale. We are focusing on infrastructure development. We have given nearly forty million homes to provide shelter to over hundred and fifty million people. That is nearly six times the population of Australia! We run a national health insurance program that ensures free medical treatment for about five hundred million people. That is greater than the population of South America! We took banking to the unbanked with the world’s largest financial inclusion drive. Nearly five hundred million people benefited.

This is close to the population of North America! We have worked on building Digital India. Today, there are more than eight hundred and fifty million smart phones and internet users in the country. This is more than the population of Europe! We protected our people with two point two billion doses of made in India COVID vaccines, and that too free of cost! I may be running out of continents soon, so I will stop here!

The Vedas are one of the world’s oldest scriptures. They are a great treasure of humanity, composed thousands of years ago. Back then, women sages composed many verses in the Vedas. And today, in modern India, women are leading us to a better future. India’s vision is not just of development which benefits women. It is of women-led development, where women lead the journey of progress. A woman has risen from a humble tribal background, to be our Head of State.

Nearly one point five million elected women lead us at various levels and that is of

local governments. Today, women serve our country in the Army, Navy and Air Force. India also has the highest percentage of women airline pilots in the world. And, they have also put us on Mars, by leading our Mars Mission. I believe that investing in a girl child lifts up the entire family. Empowering women, transforms the nation.

India is an ancient nation with a youthful population. India is known for its traditions. But the younger generation is also making it a hub of technology. Be it creative reels on Insta or real time payments, coding or quantum computing, machine learning or mobile apps, FinTech or data science, the youth of India are a great example of how a society can embrace latest technology. In India, technology is not only about innovation but also about inclusion. Today, digital platforms are empowering the rights and dignity of people, while protecting privacy.

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In the last nine years, over a billion people got a unique digital biometric identity connected with their bank accounts and mobile phones. This digital public infrastructure helps us reach citizens within seconds with financial assistance. Eight hundred and fifty million people receive direct benefit financial transfers into their accounts. Three times a year, over hundred million farmers receive assistance in their bank accounts at the click of a button. The value of such transfers has crossed three hundred and twenty billion dollars, and we have saved over twenty five billion dollars in the process. If you visit India, you will see everyone is using phones for payments, including street vendors.

Last year, out of every 100 real time digital payments in the world, 46 happened in India. Nearly four hundred thousand miles of optical fibre cables, and cheap data have ushered in a revolution of opportunities. Farmers check weather updates, the elderly get social security payments, students access scholarships, doctors deliver tele-medicine, fishermen check fishing grounds and small businesses get loans, with just a tap on their phones.

A spirit of democracy, inclusion and sustainability defines us. It also shapes our outlook to the world. India grows while being responsible about our planet.

We believe: ‘Mother Earth: I am the son of the earth.’ This means -“the Earth is our Mother and we are her children.”

Indian culture deeply respects the environment and our planet. While becoming the fastest growing economy, we grew our solar capacity by Two Thousand Three Hundred Percent! Yes, you heard it right – Two Thousand Three Hundred Percent!

We became the only G20 country to meet its Paris commitment. We made renewables account for over forty percent of our energy sources, nine years ahead of the target of 2030. But we did not stop there. At the Glasgow Summit, I proposed Mission LiFE- Lifestyle for Environment. This is a way to make sustainability a true people’s movement. Not leave it to be the job of governments alone.

By being mindful in making choices, every individual can make a positive impact. Making sustainability a mass movement will help the world reach the Net Zero target faster. Our vision is pro-planet progress. Our vision is pro-planet prosperity. Our vision is pro-planet people.

We live by the motto of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam or The World is One Family. Our engagement with the world is for everyone’s benefit. The “One Sun, One World, One Grid” seeks to join us all in connecting the world with clean energy. “One Earth, One Health” is a vision for global action to bring quality healthcare to everyone, including animals and plants.

The same spirit is also seen in the theme when we Chair the G20 – “One Earth, One Family, One Future.” We advance the spirit of unity through Yoga as well. The whole world came together to celebrate the International Day of Yoga. All nations joined our proposal at the UN to build a Memorial Wall to honor the peacekeepers.

And this year, the whole world is celebrating the International Year of Millets, to promote sustainable agriculture and nutrition alike. During Covid, we delivered vaccines and medicines to over hundred and fifty countries. We reach out to others during disasters as first responders, as we do for our own. We share our modest resources with those who need them the most. We build capabilities, not dependencies.

When I speak about India’s approach to the world, the United States occupies a special place. I know our relations are of great importance to all of you. Every Member of this Congress has a deep interest in it. When defence and aerospace in India grow, industries in the states of Washington, Arizona, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania thrive. When American companies grow, their research and development centres in India thrive. When Indians fly more, a single order for aircrafts creates more than a million jobs in forty four states in America.

When an American phone maker invests in India, it creates an entire ecosystem of jobs and opportunities, in both countries. When India and the US work together on semi-conductors and critical minerals, it helps the world in making supply chains more diverse, resilient and reliable. Indeed, Mister Speaker, we were strangers in defence cooperation at the turn of the century. Now, the United States has become one of our most important defence partners. Today India and the US are working together, in space and in the seas, in science and in semi-conductors, in start-ups and sustainability, in tech and in trade, in farming and finance, in art and artificial intelligence, in energy and education, in healthcare and humanitarian efforts.

I can go on and on. But, to sum it up, I would say, the scope of our co-operation is endless, the potential of our synergies is limitless, and, the chemistry in our relations is effortless.

In all this, Indian Americans have played a big role. They are brilliant in every field, not just in Spelling Bee. With their hearts and minds, talent and skills, and their love for America and India, they have connected us; they have unlocked doors; they have shown the potential of our partnership.

Every Indian Prime Minister and American President of the past has taken our relationship further. But our generation has the honor of taking it to greater heights. I agree with President Biden that this is a defining partnership of this century. Because it serves a larger purpose. Democracy, demography and destiny give us that purpose. One consequence of globalisation has been the over-concentration of supply chains.

We will work together to diversify, decentralize, and democratise supply chains. Technology will determine the security, prosperity and leadership in the twenty first century. That is why our two countries established a new “Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technologies.” Our knowledge partnership will serve humanity and seek solutions to the global challenges of climate change, hunger and health.

The last few years have seen deeply disruptive developments. With the Ukraine conflict, war has returned to Europe. It is causing great pain in the region. Since it involves major powers, the outcomes are severe. Countries of the Global South have been particularly affected. The global order is based on the respect for the principles of the UN Charter, peaceful resolution of disputes, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As I have said directly and publicly, this is not an era of war. But, it is one of dialogue and diplomacy. And, we all must do what we can to stop the bloodshed and human suffering. Mister Speaker, The dark clouds of coercion and confrontation are casting their shadow in the Indo Pacific. The stability of the region has become one of the central concerns of our partnership.

We share a vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo Pacific, connected by secure seas, defined by international law, free from domination, and anchored in ASEAN centrality. A region where all nations, small and large, are free and fearless in their choices, where progress is not suffocated by impossible burdens of debt, where connectivity is not leveraged for strategic purposes, where all nations are lifted by the high tide of shared prosperity.

Our vision does not seek to contain or exclude, but to build a cooperative region of peace and prosperity. We work through regional institutions and with our partners from within the region and beyond. Of this, Quad has emerged as a major force of good for the region.

More than two decades after 9/11 and more than a decade after 26/11 in Mumbai, radicalism and terrorism still remain a pressing danger for the whole world. These ideologies keep taking new identities and forms, but their intentions are the same. Terrorism is an enemy of humanity and there can be no ifs or buts in dealing with it. We must overcome all such forces sponsoring and exporting terror.

COVID-19’s biggest impact was the human loss and suffering it caused. I wish to remember Congressman, Ron Wright and the staff members who lost their lives to Covid. As we emerge out of the pandemic, we must give shape to a new world order. Consideration, care and concern are the need of the hour. Giving a voice to the Global South is the way forward. That is why I firmly believe that the African Union be given full membership of G20.

We must revive multilateralism and reform multilateral institutions, with better

resources and representation. That applies to all our global institutions of governance, especially the United Nations. When the world has changed, our institutions too must change. Or, risk getting replaced by a world of rivalries without rules. In working for a new world order based on international law, our two countries will be at the forefront, as partners.

Today, we stand at a new dawn in our relationship that will not only shape the destiny of our two nations, but also that of the world. As the young American Poet Amanda Gorman has expressed:

“When day comes we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid, the new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it.”

Our trusted partnership is like the Sun in this new dawn that will spread light all around.

I am reminded of a poem that I once wrote :

Raising its head in the skies, Piercing through the dense clouds, With the promise of light, The sun has just risen. Armed with a deep resolve, Overcoming all the odds, To dispel the forces of darkness, The sun has just risen.

We come from different circumstances and history, but we are united by a common vision. And, by a common destiny. When our partnership progresses, economic resilience increases, innovation grows, science flourishes, knowledge advances, humanity benefits, our seas and skies are safer, democracy will shine brighter, and the world will be a better place.

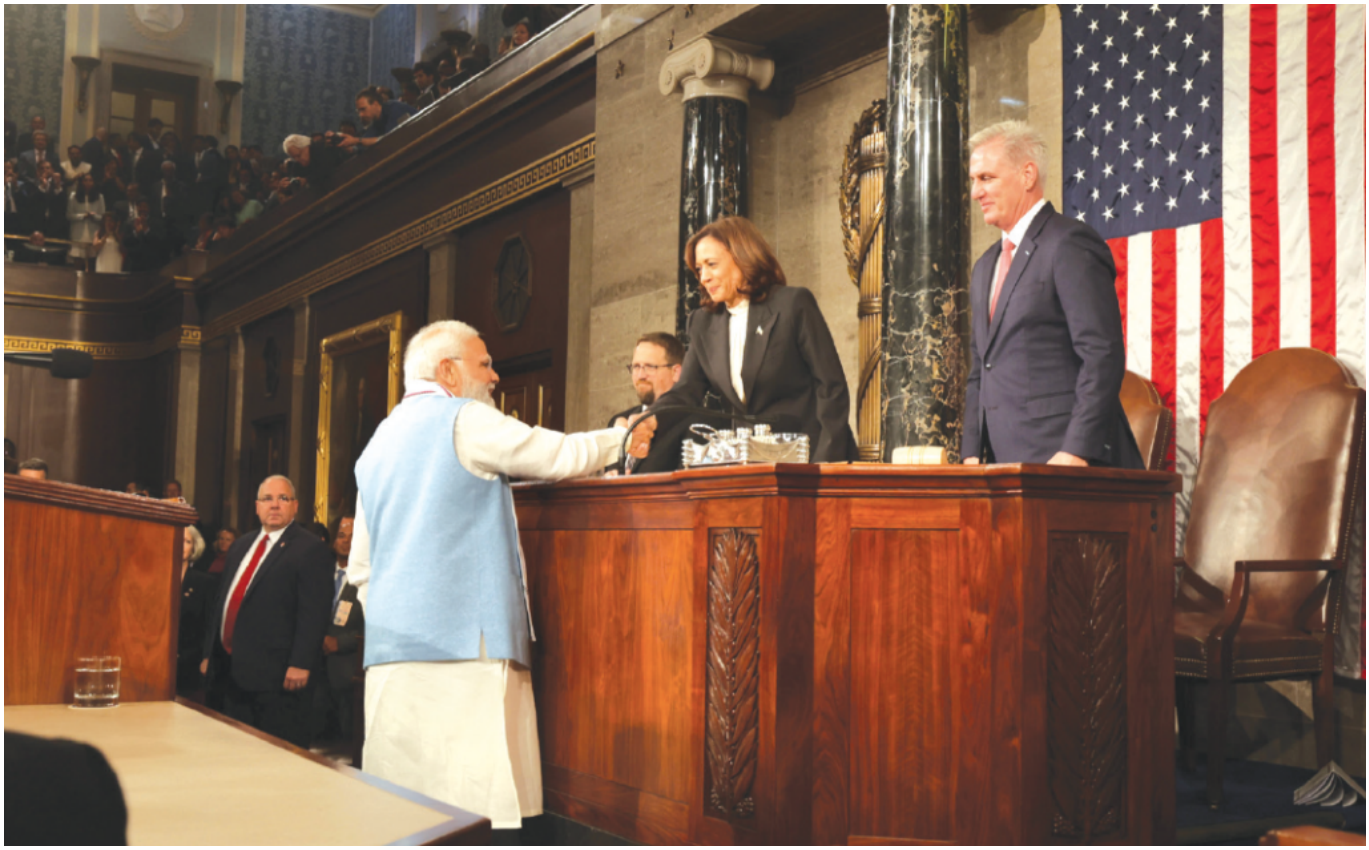
That is the mission of our partnership. That is our calling for this century. Mister Speaker and Distinguished members, Even by the high standards of our partnership, this visit is one of a great positive transformation. Together, we shall demonstrate that democracies matter and democracies deliver. I count on your continued support to the India-US partnership.

When I was here in 2016, I had said that “our relationship is primed for a momentous future”. That future is today. Thank you once again Mister Speaker, Madam Vice-President and the Distinguished Members for this honor.

God Bless America.

Jai Hind.

Long Live India-US friendship.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanges greetings with Kamala D. Harris, Vice President of the United States of America. Also present is Congressman Kevin McCarthy, Representative of California's 20th Congressional District and Speaker of the House.



