

For a Grand India - US Alliance
Framework of a comprehensive and creative partnership

Keynote address by

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Growth in uncertain times : Innovation and Globalisation

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you today.

To be a part of this Seventh Wharton India Economic Forum Conference is an honour.

Neha Jain, a senior at Wharton Business School is responsible for inflicting me on you.

I admire her perseverance.

She is a daughter to me.

She made me pledge that I would attend this event.

And I am here.

Thank you Neha for this excellent opportunity.

Wharton India Economic Forum is the leading student run business forum in the US.

Students like Neha have made it a renowned international platform.

I admire the Forum's commitment to place India's economic potential on the world stage.

It is expanding this awareness to the business and political leaders of this country. I must thank the forum for their great contribution to this great cause.

It reflects immense foresight, which is characteristic of this great academic institution.

And, I laud Kiran Hebbar, Rushab Kapashi and members of the Executive Committee for their unflinching commitment to India.

I specially commend you for your choice of this year's theme – 'Growth in Uncertain Times: Innovation and Globalisation'.

The theme is very apt and I propose to share my thoughts around your theme.

The world is in the grip of all-round uncertainty.

Uncertain times

In fact, the past year has easily been one of the most difficult in many decades.

The world was faced with significant economic uncertainty due to the boom and bust in the technology sector in the year 2000.

This uncertainty was hugely compounded as a consequence of 9/11 and its aftermath.

There is only one political question uppermost in every mind today.

Both in the United States as well as in India.

How to deal with the menace of terrorism?

There is growing realisation that the end of Taliban rule in Afghanistan has not changed the scene fundamentally.

The war on terrorism is not over yet.

And it will not end for some time.

This is a new kind of war, as political leaders and strategists keep reminding us.

Victory will not only be late in coming, but also be less categorical than would satisfy most of us.

We in India feel a natural solidarity for the United States in this war.

We had been fighting this war all alone for at least the last two decades.

At long last the Americans have joined us in the campaign.

But even with the entire democratic world together, victory will still be neither cheap nor easy in this war.

The war on terror is, in fact, a series of complex battles.

We have to fight across a wide front.

There will be successes as well as setbacks.

Already we have suffered some serious damage.

The 9/11 attacks disrupted the US economy, the engine that powers the global economy.

Its effect has been visible across the globe.

Economic growth rates have fallen in most countries.

Even China and India, that have done better than most, did worse than they had in the previous years.

Worrying clouds of uncertainty and anxiety have also been hovering in the Indian sky.

Our terrorist problem brought us to the brink of war with our neighbour.

The terrorist attack on our Parliament led to Indian troop mobilisation in late December 2001.

At the height of the India-Pakistan crisis, thousands of foreign business personnel were forced to leave India because of travel advisories.

The spectre of a war has had an impact on foreign investor confidence.

Fortunately, temperature in the region has lowered in recent weeks.

Our foreign exchange reserves are rising to record levels despite continued anxiety and apprehension.

This is a sign that the inherent strengths of the Indian economy are finally being recognised.

Friends,

There are grave threats of war in other theatres also.

As I speak to you today, I am not sure when the war in Gulf will break out.

I hope Saddam Hussein's acceptance of UN inspection resolves this.

But, all of us face the uncertainty that if and when war does break out in Iraq, how it will impact the world – politically and economically.

But, we must be clear on one point. The present climate of uncertainty is not merely because of the dangers of war.

Self-inflicted wounds from unethical business practices in the largest and some of the most respected corporations have had a shattering impact on public and investor confidence.

In some ways, these have been more serious wounds.

I often wonder what will be harder to achieve: restoring investor and business confidence or fighting terrorists.

Like the US economy, we have also suffered some unnecessary self-inflicted wounds this past year.

There has been renewed questioning of the direction and pace of economic reforms in India.

Efforts by the Indian government to withdraw from segments of the economy and privatise have encountered severe roadblocks.

The slow pace of infrastructure development continues to be a brake on India's economic potential.

It is true that these problems are mostly peculiar to each of our countries.

However, India and the US also face some common difficulties.

Some of these may appear to be amorphous threats.

Some may suggest that we should worry about them in the long-term rather than immediately.

But I would strongly urge that we should pay attention to them, and counter these threats now rather than later.

One such threat is the increasing revival of religious fundamentalism.

Whether it is in the US or in India, or indeed in other parts of the world.

Religious intolerance will set communities – and eventually countries – against each other.

It will undo much of what has been accomplished over the past decade. In tying the world together economically, for greater efficiency and prosperity for all.

The other threat is the more direct challenge to the idea of globalisation itself.

This is also common to both our countries.

The strength of the opposition to globalisation, especially in the West, has surprised many.

True, it is not yet a serious threat to globalisation. But we ignore this only at grave peril to the whole process.

Those that have been denied a fair share of the benefits of this process oppose globalisation. It is true of the developing world as well as the West.

Then, there are those who are convinced that the sharing will be unjust to them.

We need to ensure that the benefits of globalisation are indeed shared fairly, and seen to be shared fairly.

Then only others will share our conviction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, uncertainty overrides concerns about political stability and future economic growth.

It is reflected in the numerous questions that agitate the minds of the people everywhere.

Will technology live up to the high expectations of transforming our lives?

Do businesses reflect their results truly and correctly?

Will large corporations succeed in convincing people that they are moved by the needs of society and not only by immediate greed?

There are fears about homeland security in the United States.

There is considerable controversy about the use (or abuse) of state's powers of preventive detention in India.

Every day, fuel is added in people's minds about the nature and shape of potential terrorist strikes.

Above all, there are questions about what one's country can do.

This reminds me how citizens in different countries respond to a question about what their country can do in difficult times.

In USA, don't ask what your country can do. You don't need to.

In China, don't ask what your country can do. You will never get the answer.

In UK, don't ask what your country can do. Ask USA.

In India, don't ask what your country can do. Just leave.

This, of course, is a joke. But underneath the joke is a poignant message that conveys a lot.

But as the adage goes, every dark cloud has a silver lining. Things are changing for the better. We, you and I, have to ensure that they change faster.

India-US Alliance

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Uncertain times call for unusual solutions.

Unusual solutions can be found only by out-of-the-box thinking.

Institutions like Wharton provide the space for such adventures in ideation.

Forums like yours are legitimate platforms for some loud thinking.

I, therefore, take this opportunity to indulge in this exercise.

In the hope that it will spur some meaningful debate and discussions.

Our challenge in this environment is to ensure that uncertainty does not impede growth.

That anxiety of the moment does not slow down the pace of globalisation.

That innovation improves not only the quality of products, but also the quality of processes and thinking.

I believe, India and the US can, together navigate through these uncertainties.

They can do this by blending wisdom with dynamism.

By fusing science with sensitivity.

By bringing about the convergence of potentials with performance.

For this to happen, we need to look at the present day challenges in a totally new perspective.

Cast our relationship in an entirely new paradigm.

We need innovation.

First and foremost in our minds.

Before it occurs in economy or society.

*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 tackling some of the major challenges across the globe.

Let me outline the framework of this Grand Alliance.

I will not present a complete thesis.

This, academicians and scholars can do better than me.

I will only underline the high points.

To spark a debate and a discussion.

I see in this audience an impressive pool of talent to develop and deepen these ideas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will recall that the Indian Prime Minister did say three years ago that India and the United States are natural allies in the 21st century.

Both President Clinton and President Bush have talked of the strategic significance of the ties between the two countries.

Then, why have the promise and potential of this relationship remained unrealised?

The reason, I submit, is linear thinking.

On both sides, there is a preoccupation to continue to do what has been done in the past; but do it better.

This will not do. We need to think differently; do things differently.

We need to discover the non-linear dynamics in India-US relations.

It is there in the social-economic-political interface of the two countries.

We only have to have the insight to discern it.

Let me explain.

Normally, all talk of India-US relations begins with a narration of what India needs.

It is followed by prescriptions about what India should do.

Indians resent this.

They think Americans do not understand their structural problems.

Americans become impatient. They complain that India does not move fast enough.

I suggest we put this long tale of mutual recrimination behind us.

And begin to think together.

Let me begin with the most pressing needs of the US economy.

And where India can contribute in meeting these needs.

Economic growth paradigm for USA

In my view, the US economy is facing a whole range of short-term and medium-term problems, affecting businesses as well as common people.

I have chosen to highlight a few that have relevance to our partnership.

Social security and Medicare costs will impose a heavy burden on US economy restricting its rate of growth.

To provide social security, a decreasing number of younger population must support increasing number of older population.

It is therefore highly imperative that the US workforce must have the highest rate of per capita economic output.

This can only be achieved by allocating its scarce human resource to its highest value use.

For this, US has to focus on innovation and high technology endeavours where it leads the world.

The crisis of health care in US is a crisis of exploding costs.

Over 20% of cost of US health care is reflected in administrative, compliance, and oversight kind of activities.

The challenge is to open this black box and to see how these activities can be outsourced to significantly lower cost destinations.

Health care costs are further exacerbated by increasing costs for drug development.

The advances in genomics are expected to multiply the number of targets for drug development from the current 400 in numbers to 4000.

The current financial and human resources in the western world will not be adequate to undertake the clinical development of drugs corresponding to these targets.

A usual drug takes \$500-\$800 million and over 10 years to develop.

Indo-US co-operation in health care field has several major possibilities.

India can play a major role by dedicating its biologist resources, chemist resources, its hospitals and its medical doctors for clinical trials and drug development.

Its patient population is large and diverse to provide reliable clinical results.

We can together reduce the cost of health care significantly.

Hence there is commonality of national purpose for the two countries to immensely benefit their populations.

These are bold measures that need paradigm shifts.

We must plan for making this happen rather than letting this happen.

Productive human resources in USA are also becoming a constraint.

This is because of demographic changes.

An aging population is slowly weighing US down.

Today, one fifth of the American population is above the age of 60.

In 25 years time, this number will increase to a quarter of the population.

US is already facing a shortage of skilled professionals.

This will further accentuate.

Over the next 10 to 15 years, professional workforce shortage in the US will peak to 15 million.

Thus, a stage has come, when further economic growth for US looks feasible only through an ability to access resources from outside.

In other words, for US to grow, it would have to move away from the current high cost, resource strained, foreign savings driven economic growth model.

US would have to shift to a lower cost, resource leveraged, foreign alliance driven economic growth.

Over the last two decades, the US co-operations have given up low-end manufacturing.

They have overcome several protectionist measures and narrow ways of thinking.

Consequently, US consumers are able to get cheaper goods and services.

Scarce human resources can be allocated to higher value added activities.

This will enable large-scale organisations to shift from producing goods of mass consumption.

China has taken advantage of this and is the mass-market industrial converter.

The US economy will move towards a higher component of services.

The next bold move for US corporations will be to focus on value addition through innovation and farm out services.

In this, India with its trained manpower and familiarity with English language and system is a strong partner.

India has built a strong brand on efforts of its young information technology professionals.

Efforts have already been made in this direction by several forward-looking organisations in US. US companies have set up call centers in India for their back office operations.

IBM, Nortel, Motorola and Microsoft are undertaking significant R&D activities in India.

These are incremental efforts by visionary companies. They reflect the great potential that exists between the two countries.

The US in this decade is a 'connected economy'.

The opportunity is to have India increase productivity manifold in the US economy.

Just as China dominates the mass manufacturing market, India has the opportunity to dominate the knowledge age.

Every activity in a connected world will be powered by Indian intellect and India originated high quality services.

The United States is the richest country on this planet.

It leads the world in technology.

It has enormous creativity.

It has commitment to growth.

It is fired with a mission for a better world.

These are invaluable assets.

These can be leveraged to offset the liabilities.

For the good of Americans.

For the good of humanity.

And in this, India can play a big role.

And they benefit tremendously.

Economic potential of India

Let me illustrate the Indian side of the partnership with few concrete illustrations.

Agriculture

Talking of innovation, growth and partnerships, let me start with agriculture.

India employs a large proportion of its workforce in agriculture.

With 400 million acres of irrigated land and 75 million acres of wasteland, the most favourable weather and low cost workforce, India has the potential to reach an agricultural output in trillions of US dollars and be the most efficient granary to the world.

Today, India is getting out of its outmoded socialist thinking in many progressive states – welcoming private sector partnerships to achieve world-class quality and productivity in agriculture.

In the US, in the coming years there will be immense pressure from the global community to reduce farm subsidies.

US has the potential of becoming a major partner in realising India's agricultural potential.

US leads the world in modern farming technologies, plant biotechnology, crop diversification and farm productivity.

Agriculture post harvest facilities and food processing factories in India can be integrated with retail markets in the US.

This can bring down costs substantially for the American consumer.

It will bring prospects for the Indian farmer.

Manufacturing

I would not dwell at length on manufacturing.

Sufficient to say that India has major competitive advantage in discrete/skill-intensive manufacturing as against low-end assembly line manufacturing where China dominates.

I would like to focus on Energy, Infocom and Life Sciences including health care.

I call them the trinity that will shape the future of humankind in the 21st century.

Energy

Let us begin with the Energy Sector.

Energy for India is the key to accelerate growth.

India and the United States stand to gain enormously by capital-technology-market alliance across the board in the energy sector: from nuclear to oil and gas to renewable energy sources.

For example, India needs investment in atomic energy projects.

American atomic energy producers need the huge Indian market.

There is complete absence of new atomic energy projects in the US.

Here is one complementarity that can be realised with a minor change in American policy.

While on energy, I am glad to tell you that last month my company Reliance Industries Limited announced the largest ever gas find in India in three decades, with in place reserves of 7 trillion cubic feet.

For this, most of the front-end work was done in Houston.

This is an outcome of exploring just 2,000 square kilometers in deep waters of the Bay of Bengal.

We still have about 175,000 square kilometers to explore.

Based on this, I am convinced that India is a largely under explored territory in oil and gas.

Over the next few years this situation will change as Reliance, as well as other companies, prospect for oil and gas on land, in shallow waters and in deep waters of India.

Finding its own hydrocarbon reserves will give India energy security and a basis for sound economic growth.

India has the potential to generate an output of one trillion dollars from the energy sector in about twenty years.

And in this entire area, possibility of mutually gainful India-US partnership is almost unlimited.

It will fundamentally alter global energy security scenario.

Information and Communications

Let us now take the Infocom sector.

Information infrastructure is crucial for economic development.

In fact, true progress of a country should not be judged by its GDP alone.

In the knowledge age, it should be measured by the information services percolating into each home.

But the cost of an information infrastructure connecting each home is a massive challenge, even for advanced countries.

India is poised to fulfil this challenge.

It can do so successfully in partnership with the United States.

Two years ago, the Government of India deregulated the telecommunication sector.

As I see it, this is the most important sector for India, given the context of an information age.

Thanks to this deregulation.

Several players including my company Reliance are making huge investments in this sector.

We are creating next generation telecom infrastructure that will connect the entire nation.

By 2003, India will have the most modern information and communication infrastructure in the world.

Reliance will play a vital role in making that happen.

We, at Reliance, are committed to connect India with a digital distribution system that will leapfrog India to have a state-of-the-art, reliable, secure and affordable connectivity.

Our vision is to connect all the 640,000 villages and all 2,000 odd towns and cities to each other and to the world in a seamless way.

This overarching infocom infrastructure will prepare India to harness the potential of millions of knowledge workers in India.

India already has a head start in the information technology enabled services business.

It enjoys revenues that are five times of its nearest competitor, the Philippines.

American firms are able to service clients in the US and across the globe for a fraction of what it would cost in the US or in other parts of the world.

India is emerging as a back office to the world.

India-US partnership in infocom can contribute significantly to reduce the transaction costs in the US economy and spur economic growth in India.

In alliance with US, India can take the leadership in knowledge intensive businesses.

India has a large and well-trained manpower, a manpower that is English-friendly.

India has natural advantages in this sector that most other countries in East Asia will never be able to match – its huge pool of relatively low cost labour, which is educated, technologically savvy and, as I said earlier, English-friendly.

And this pool is only growing larger.

More and more Indian teenagers recognise the opportunities in the communications and information technology-related sectors.

The pool of talent and skill available in India is growing by leaps and bounds.

Joint efforts in software product development and hardware design in India can be made with great success.

India is home to 600,000 software developers, which would grow to three million in about five years.

Today, a connected world is a reality.

In the infocom sector the US-India partnership has the potential to power all the intellectual systems and applications in the connected world, with US technology and Indian services talent.

Life Sciences / Health Care

Now, let us look at life sciences and health care, which offers another great opportunity for India-US co-operation.

I believe that the twentieth century was the century of physics and chemistry. The twenty first century is the century of biology.

The United States remains the undisputed biotech capital of the world.

It accounts for USD 25 billion in sales of biotechnology products out of a global sales of USD 35 billion.

US companies have been investing significant amounts in research and development as well.

For example, in 2001, US spent USD 11.5 billion on research and development.

This is of paramount importance.

Today, mankind is using biotechnologies to understand, alter and direct the function of a wide set of organic cells – in plants, animals and humans.

It is predicted that by the year 2025, gene therapies will become available for every major conceivable disease.

Artificial assist devices will take over diseased liver and pancreatic functions.

Individualised medicine will be developed on the basis of each person's genetic make-up.

Genetic manipulation will alter human traits. Animal cloning will be used to produce new drugs.

Humanised transgenic animals will be reared to produce organs for transplantation.

New vaccine technologies will be successful in treating drug addiction.

Therapies for reducing the effects of aging will be in vogue.

Tissue engineered organs will be available for replacement of diseased ones.

The discovery of the code of life, or genome, written in the sequence of four nucleotides that form the DNA, has enabled man to discover life and design life. A process that took nature three billion years to develop has been re-created by human technology in an incredibly short span of time.

Biotechnology is also moving towards decoding the library of proteins in the body. This will enable mankind to alter the very metabolism of life processes.

Biotechnology can impact every one of the 6 billion people in the world today.

In fact every single plant and animal and every single material that we use will be impacted by it.

Meaningful research will help us grow more out of existing resources. It can make factories out of farms.

It will also stimulate international economy in a very big way.

It is estimated that the global life sciences market will be in the order of USD 2 trillion in the next five years.

This area offers vast opportunities for India-US Partnership.

In addition, collaborative and contract research can be carried out between US and Indian companies in the areas of stem cells, tissue engineering, biopharmaceutical development and plant-based drugs.

We, at Reliance, have taken concrete measures to explore this exciting area.

Reliance Life Sciences is developing business opportunities in the domains of medical biotechnology, plant biotechnology, industrial biotechnology, contract research and clinical trials.

This initiative seeks to take cues from thousands of years of knowledge in traditional Indian schools of medicine.

Our researchers are trying to combine it with modern science and technology to discover and develop drug candidates.

Reliance is one of the ten institutions worldwide listed by the US National Institutes of Health for work in the area of embryonic stem cells.

Reliance is also developing a relationship with premier US universities for shared research efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India has everything going for it in health care – competent doctors, strong nursing skill sets, a resurgent pharmaceutical industry, strong chemistry-based drug discovery capabilities and a modest, but growing, breed of medical biologists.

India-US partnership in the area of healthcare can substantially reduce healthcare costs for the US citizens, open up a major economic opportunity for India and improve the quality of healthcare delivery for the Indian people.

India can provide a whole range of services, from medical transcription to telemedicine through a modern information and communication infrastructure.

Clinical services for ailments outside the scope of medical insurance or for disabilities involving a long waiting time can be performed in India in state-of-the-art facilities.

The emergence of private corporate hospitals, with state-of-the-art equipment, people and processes motivates me to think in this manner.

In alliance with the US, India can grow as a leading health care provider to the world.

In short, the potential for health care in India is enormous, given technology and new research-led drugs and therapies.

And India-US partnership in this area will improve delivery of healthcare in our country, reduce costs for Americans and make good business sense.

Professional Resource Base

Success of India-US alliance in these areas requires a massive co-operation in harnessing human resources.

I see an India-US synergy of spectacular magnitude in this field: I include in it complementarity in Scientific Research as well as Education.

We can build a magnificent edifice of innovation and growth on those two pillars.

Let me elaborate.

Friends,

A little while ago I talked of the demographic factor in the US economic growth.

Demography is kind to India.

India has a young population.

Just 7% of Indians are above the age of 60.

In 25 years time only 12% will be above sixty.

India will continue to be young and will see a swelling workforce.

The US economic growth needs scientific talent.

India has a large pool of scientific, technical and professional talent.

The Indian professional has proven creativity, adaptability and a spirit of initiative.

US technology organisations have attained global leadership in the technology sector.

In making this possible, Indians in America have played a very important role.

This has happened primarily by NRIs living in the US.

In the industrial age, this phenomenon was described as 'brain drain'.

In the knowledge age, this should be viewed as synergy of minds.

Surely several of our bright people will continue to move to US.

I see this as a positive factor.

They are a significant resource.

Indian economy and society can harness it in a big way.

Experts can help as consultants.

Young people can also contribute without dislocating their moorings; they can give to India the benefit of their dynamism and energy for short spells of three to five years.

This process will energise the Indian system and lend vigor to the organisations, institutions and processes.

For the US, greater opportunities lie in taking advantage of a much greater pool of human resource talent available in India.

India can easily raise its professional resource base twenty fold – from five million to a hundred million professionals.

In other words, India has the means to run the global race in the knowledge age.

And in this enterprise, meaningful partnership with the United States can be a major catalyst.

It will serve the needs of both countries.

Scientific Research

In the medium term, vigorous scientific research is a major prerequisite of economic revival in the United States.

India-US partnership can reduce costs for the US and give a tremendous boost to the Indian economy.

Talking of India and technology, I am reminded of the encounter between communication specialists from America, Europe and India.

The American boasted that 100 years ago if you had dug 100 meters into the ground in America, you would have found optic fiber cables, because Americans pioneered them.

The European countered that 1000 years ago, if you dug 1,000 meters into the earth in Europe, you would have found copper cables, because Europeans pioneered copper cables.

The Indian thought hard. He told the others that 10,000 years ago, if you dug 10,000 meters into the earth in India, you would not have found anything. Why? The others asked. We were already using wireless system those days, he said.

There is probably an element of truth in this joke.

For thousands of years, India was in a commanding position in technology and innovation.

The world's first university was established in Takshashila in 700 BC.

More than 10,500 students from all over the world studied about 60 subjects.

Ayurveda was practiced 2,500 years ago.

It is today gaining a rightful place as an alternative school of medicine in the US and elsewhere.

Sushruta conducted surgeries 2,600 years ago for cataract, fractures and urinary stones.

The art of navigation was born in the river Sindh 6,000 years ago.

Bhaskaracharya calculated the time taken by Earth to orbit the Sun in the 5th century.

Algebra, trigonometry and calculus came from India.

Sridharacharya formulated quadratic equations in the 11th century.

But then we slipped.

We missed the breakthroughs of industrial revolution.

Our pursuit of knowledge became divorced from innovation.

It tended to become repetitive and sterile.

Now in partnership with United States we want to get back on high road of growth and innovation.

Free Trade

My central proposition is very simple: Both India and US have the unique opportunity to harness their complementarities.

Foreign direct investment is currently seen as a measure of progress of economic ties between the two countries.

I suggest we move away from this limited vision.

I urge you to build a new metrics of India-US engagement.

We should measure the depth of our relationship by two strategic parameters: India's contribution to reduce costs for the US and America's contribution by way of technology and outsourcing to India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All this makes a very strong case for India and US engagement for mutual economic prosperity.

To realise this, both US and India need a new model for economic growth.

I venture to suggest the creation of a free trade area between US and India in the knowledge age.

This has obvious advantages to both India and the US.

It would ensure freer movement and exchange of intellectual property, capital and technology, highly skilled labour force virtually and physically, greater access to markets and development of education infrastructure in India.

Such an agreement would also make it easier and more attractive for American investment in India, especially in critical infrastructure sectors such as telecommunications and power.

This would institutionalise the liberalisation of US-India trade.

It will have multiplier effects on global trade and domestic economic activity.

Much of the uncertainty that appears to constantly dog US-India economic relations would be a distant memory with such a bold initiative.

History gives us confidence that the elite thinking groups in US have the courage to make such bold moves.

There is huge opportunity waiting for both the countries. We have to generate the courage to seize it without hesitation and reservations.

Reliance and USA

Friends,

My strong conviction in the benefits of India-US partnership flows from our experience in the growth process of Reliance.

The growth of Reliance has been hailed in India and elsewhere as a miracle.

My father, late Mr. Dhirubhai Ambani, made this miracle possible.

He created the US\$ 14 billion Reliance group within a span of under 25 years - from scratch to a Fortune-500 corporation.

At the young age of 17, he left the country.

Sailing in uncharted seas, he reached Aden and worked in a Shell facility.

He returned to India with the dream of setting up a bigger and better refinery in the country.

He did not rest till Reliance established the world's largest grassroots refinery, a five billion US dollars project.

Today, Reliance is among the top five companies in the world in polyester, among the top ten in the world in plastics, owns and operates one of the largest refineries in the world and is an energy major in its own right, at par with any multinational.

It took some time.

It took a lot of effort.

It took exceptional vision.

It demanded unusual determination.

He had all this and much more.

He was a remarkable man.

“Our dreams have to be bigger. Our ambitions higher”, he would say.

And then he would enter a caveat, “And our efforts greater.”

With an exciting combination of ideas and tireless efforts, he earned the affection and admiration of millions of ordinary men and women.

He created wealth for them and brought happiness to their lives.

He became a living legend.

Dhirubhai was an achiever with an uncommon spark.

It is not surprising that he admired the United States as a nation of unparalleled achievements.

The relationship of Reliance with the United States began with technology partnerships across a wide range of products.

Collaboration with leading American companies like Bechtel in project management and as prime technology licensor played a significant role in executing the world’s largest grassroots refinery project.

About 300 American citizens lived and worked in Jamnagar to make the refinery a reality.

Dhirubhai believed in harnessing the best of talent in setting up world-class projects.

He encouraged us to access the vast reservoir of talent in the United States.

And we have never been disappointed.

Presently, Reliance Infocomm is working along with leading US companies like Lucent and Qualcomm in building the next generation digital distribution system.

Today, we have over 1,000 US citizens working in India in this endeavour.

The Reliance experience presents a model for a mutually beneficial alliance.

The United States providing technology and capital and India providing market, investment opportunities and services.

Also, this should convince you that I am not merely sharing with you untested propositions.

My propositions are rooted in concrete experience – the Reliance experience.

My faith in the mutually beneficial potential of an India-US alliance has been validated in a concrete business environment.

The credit for this must go to my father Mr. Dhirubhai Ambani.

He had great admiration for the United States.

And, this I do not say, by way of a formality.

Not also because he sent me to Stanford in the United States for my MBA.

Though my bias for the US must have something to do with it.

Prof. Singh,

Memories of your visit to India in 1998 suddenly come back to my mind.

When my father was presented the prestigious Dean's Medal on behalf of the Wharton School.

What he said on that occasion still rings in my ears.

He said (I quote) "American pioneers are an inspiring example of grit and determination".

He himself was a man of unflinching determination.

He had unshakable faith in Indian people.

More than anything else, he had enormous confidence in the youth.

And I quote him “Give the youth a proper environment. Extend them the support they need. Each one of them has infinite source of energy. They will deliver”.

I am happy that I am here at Wharton today, speaking to this young and enlightened audience to present to you his dreams and vision – a strong India-US relationship, and India as an economic superpower in the twenty first century.

Conclusion

To return to my theme, the complementarities in the two economies are so well matched that it is difficult to believe that Indo-US economic relations are in the kind of state that they actually are.

This needs to change, and now. And this is eminently feasible.

For this, I repeat, we need to discard the conventional thinking.

For this we need an attitudinal revolution.

A quantum leap in thought-processes is an essential pre-condition of a quantum leap in economic relations.

You, my young friends; your esteemed teachers and the Indian American community can take the lead in realising the tremendous potential of India-US partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 21st century will witness two fiercely fought wars.

The war for progress and the war for talent.

The have-nots will fight one.

The haves will fight the other.

The two are intertwined.

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

I invite you to promote India-US alliances to win this war – first in our minds, then in economy and business.

I have no doubt that this will lead to a better global civil society in the twenty first century.

My young friends,

Before I conclude, allow me to remind you of a very important facet of our recent history.

In India's battle for regaining her independence, leadership was provided by young Indians educated in England.

They imbibed ideas of democracy and liberty, returned to their country and ignited the fire of freedom.

Today, in the 21st century, it has fallen upon your shoulders, young Indians in the United States, to ignite the fire for India's economic rejuvenation.

You can become a bridge between Indian aspiration and global opportunity.

You can make India a major economic power within your lifetime.

This you can do by working for a Grand US-India Alliance; for a comprehensive, and creative partnership between the two countries.

By removing all bottlenecks in the two way flow of knowledge, technology, capital, products and services.

To you, my young friends, I can give no better advice than what my father gave me and to India's young men and women on that memorable evening "Do not accept defeat. You will certainly win. For you represent the future"

I urge you to work for a Grand India-US Alliance with this spirit.

The spirit of the future. Not the hang over of the past.

Thank you.

For a Grand India - US Alliance
Framework of a comprehensive and creative partnership

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