

# THE INDIA I GREW UP TO BELIEVE IN

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I belong to the 1990 generation which jump started the Indian economy from the depths of despair to the heights of hope. The India that was born in 1947 and the decades that led to what it is today cannot really be put into words, but only appreciated in the remembering. We survived, we grew, and we took on the world. When everyone started writing off India, we ensured that we rise up to build another day.

I grew up in a missionary school, earned my college degree from a south Indian Hindu society and received my doctor of medicine from an Islamic University. By this I saw firsthand what secularism means and what democracy can be. With every passing day living life on the by-lanes of Mumbai then erstwhile Bombay, I learnt heavily through the extra-ordinary school called experience. I recognized that India is that country on earth, that if you work hard and if you persist at what you do, you will succeed no matter who you are, what you wear, which religion you believe in and what your family circumstances are. Mumbai was a melting pot of cultures which brought people together from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from the North East to the Far South. It made you realize that the spirit of grace and fraternity, of tolerance, of humanity are tenets to be lived and practised, not merely talked about.

The idea of India which I grew up to believe in, is one that has evolved from the age of dowry and suppression; to the India which now leads the world in the spaces of science, sends its men to moon and above all teaches the world the true meaning of hard work, the true meaning of national integration despite all differences, the spirit of tolerance and love.

There is no country on earth as tolerant as India, there is no country on earth where there is so much diversity yet so much peace, so much competition, yet so much success, so much eye-brow raising moments, but lasting joy.

Yes, we have our problems and this needs to be addressed with impeccable prudence and concerned tact, but the driving force behind this is the investment we must be able to make in-order to channelize the energies of our people. We need to build people, while we build bridges and sky-scrapers. What is needed is to build communities and societies to take greater stride and have more faith in the work they do.

I came to understand that pursuing progressive goals with a clear vision will yield results. Through the years, I have been there and doing that through the quest of strengthening public health systems.

A lot has changed over the years and to the decades that led to 2017, but putting that aside, the expression of humanity stands in need of re-discovering a part of itself that stands forgotten today.

With all the problems and fault-lines that engulf our country today, we must remember that India survived through the years, not because of its politics, not because of the way politicians are, but because of the very powerful Indian Middle Class to whom I give full marks. This Indian Middle Class has built the country brick by brick, moment by moment, day by day and has pushed India as a force for the world to reckon with and embrace.

This is our tranformatory moment, what remains needed at this juncture is a breakthrough commitment of faith in the promise of democracy and what has guided us as Indians and as children of this universe.

Let us love stronger once more, work harder again and enkindle the very spirit which remains at the very heart of being Indian. Let us bring the world to our door-steps, now and forever more.