**Speech of the Prime Minister of India in Joint Session of the Parliament of Bhutan (Thimphu)**

The Prime Minister of India (Shri Narendra Modi): Your Highness, Speaker Shri Lyonpo Jigme Zangpo, Prime Minister Shri Tshering Tobgay, Chairman, National Council, Dr. Sonam Kinga and Hon’ble Members of the Parliament of Bhutan. It is indeed a matter of happiness for me that today I have got an opportunity to address the Joint Session of the Parliament of a young democracy and a friendly country of India. At the outset, I welcome those great traditions of Bhutan under which the Royal Family of Bhutan has inculcated high values in the country. Traditions such as caring for the welfare of the citizens, moving forward in the field of development and maintaining the cultural heritage of Bhutan at the same time and also showing awareness towards environmental protection are the traditions that did not develop in one or two generations. Many generations of the royal family have, with great efforts, upheld such traditions and for this, I congratulate and welcome the efforts of the royal family of Bhutan, rich in such traditions.

If we look at the world canvas, especially in the last century, we would find that the entire century has witnessed expansion of power

: 2:

and centralization of politics, but Bhutan has proved to be an exception.

At the time when the whole world was witnessing expansion and centralization of power, Bhutan laid a strong foundation of Democracy. In many parts of the world, there have been continuous efforts for usurpation of power. Politics is centered around such an expansionist thinking but Bhutan with its excellent approach of teaching its people through public education and ensuring constitutional order, established democratic traditions in the country.

Seven years is not a long period for democracy but in these seven years, Bhutan has successfully established constitutional propriety, democratic values and the most important power of democracy - self discipline. Self discipline is one aspect which has not only been practiced by the citizens, political parties and elected representatives of the country, but also by the royal family, which in itself is a fine example before the whole world. This is the reason that within a period of seven years common people have developed their faith in the democratic procedures, the dignity of Parliament and also

:3:

in their representatives. I consider this to be a good omen. Change of power within a short span of seven years is a fine example of the awareness of the citizens of this country. I feel that the awareness that the voters of this country have shown for improving the present conditions of the country and to ensure responsibility for its betterment, are efforts which are very auspicious for a healthy democratic tradition .

India has recently witnessed elections. India happens to be the largest democracy of the world. The wide spectrum of our democracy surprises many countries in the world. The number of voters in India alone, is more than the population or number of voters collectively in Europe and America. Elections in India are like a big festival of a large democracy. After attaining independence, it is for the first time in the history of the last sixty years in India that the voters have voted out a political party which was ruling for the past many years and by voting in large majority, they have given an opportunity to the Bhartiya Janata Party to serve the country, this is the power of democracy. The more powerful democratic forces become in this region and the more effectively democratic values are established here, the more efficient medium it shall prove to be for establishment of peace, development

: 4 :

of activities and welfare measures for poorest of the poor citizens in this part of the world.

The citizens of India have given a mandate for developmental and good governance. I fully agree with what has been stated by the Hon’ble Speaker that a strong India will be beneficial for Bhutan. Not only Bhutan but a strong and prosperous India will also be beneficial for the SAARC countries. Hence it is important that India should be strong and prosperous because it is only then that India would be able to eradicate the problems and difficulties of its small neighbouring countries. How shall we be able to help our neighbours if we are in problem? Every country looks at its neighbours first. Hence it is the duty of a nation to take care of her neighbour. But if India remains weak, struggling with her own internal problems, then how would she be able to think for the welfare and happiness of her neighbouring countries. India has always been aware of the interest and welfare of her neighbours and has always been making continuous efforts for the same. When the new Government was formed, we invited the leaders of the SAARC countries and all the eminent leaders graced the oath taking ceremony with their auspicious presence. Hon’ble Prime

: 5 :

Minister of Bhutan also came to India. I extend my heartfelt thanks to him for this gesture.

Is it a fact that the relations between India and Bhutan are those of Government and governance only? I think it is not right to say that the relationship between India and Bhutan is that of governance only. Bhutan witnessed change in Government establishing Democracy, but this did not change our relationship at all. India also witnessed change in Governments but this did not affect the relationship between India and Bhutan and the reason behind such a relationship is the cultural heritage, the cultural traditions that we follow and the cultural unity that we share with each other. We are not united because we have opened our borders, we feel united because we have opened our hearts for each other. Be it Bhutan or India both the countries have opened their hearts for each other and that is why we feel united and in this unity, we feel strength and power. Change in Governments do not lead to change of heart. Borders can not bind us. In that sense, relationship between India and Bhutan is that of ancient heritage carried through history. The successive generations of India and Bhutan have to maintain and restore such an ancient heritage and

: 6 :

have to strengthen it all the more. The new Government in India and each citizen of our country is well committed to this relationship.

I came to Bhutan yesterday. It is my first visit to Bhutan. Any person, after becoming the Prime Minster and having such an excellent mandate from the people in elections, would feel that he should visit some powerful and prosperous country of the world, which would bring him to fame and popularity. It is very natural to get swayed away by such a thought, but within my conscience, I felt that if I would ever make my first visit to any country, it would be Bhutan. I did not have to give much thought to it and did not make any plans. It was a natural step. In fact, had I decided not to come to Bhutan, my conscience would have asked me as to why did I not come here because , it is only the warmth of a close relationship which has inspired me to come to Bhutan and be fortunate enough to meet you all.

I have this feeling that in the next ten years, the development model of Bhutan will become a source of inspiration for other small countries of the world that would closely observe as to how Bhutan progressed despite many difficulties.

: 7 :

I congratulate you on the fact that your biggest achievement is, that in terms of growth and development, you have tried to reach even the last man of the society.

Today, the world is holding discussions on aspects like the rate of development or the GDP etc., but Bhutan is one country which considers the “happiness Quotient” more important for its people. This criteria of happiness can come to our mind only when the Government thinks of the welfare of people at the grass root level. Hence we do consider providing good roads, water facilities, good schools, good hospitals but we need to ascertain that the beneficiaries of all these amenities should feel ‘happy’ and ‘satisfied’ which is the actual norm of growth and development. So the conclusion is, that the basic unit of development is neither a nation, nor a state, nor any vision, but each individual of the country. This in itself is a very innovative and bold decision to ensure that each individual is attaining a level of growth and development, s/he is getting the benefit of all welfare measures, having a peaceful sleep and a peaceful life and is also able to bring up his/her children in the manner as s/he desires. Such a way of thinking is really a source of inspiration for all.

: 8 :

Bhutan is located in the lap of nature. There are ample natural resources in this country. Along with this Bhutan is also a source of energy. In the past few years, India and Bhutan have collectively taken many initiatives in the field of energy. Now we intend to expand the scope of this initiative. Through the Hydro-Power Project of Bhutan, we are producing power, which has many other benefits besides improving the economic condition of Bhutan or providing electricity to various parts of India. In fact this joint venture of India and Bhutan is a genuine effort for the humankind and also the whole world which is combating the serious crisis of global warming. Such efforts prove to be very beneficial for providing sustainable development. I hope that this joint venture of India and Bhutan will be seen as a step forward for the welfare of humanity in our fight against global warming and also for the welfare of future generations.

I felt really happy to know that in 2014 Bhutan is going to spend a substantial amount of its budget in the field of education, which means that Bhutan is not only thinking of the ‘happiness’ of the present generation but is also sowing the seeds of happiness for future generations.

: 9 :

There is a famous saying that the people who have a vision for only one year, produce only seasonal food grain and those who have a vision for ten years, produce flowers and fruits, but those who have a far-sighted vision for generations together, they ‘grow’ qualitative humans. Education is the best way to enhance the standard of human beings which would lead to a qualitative development of the new generation. And I, from the core of my heart, congratulate the successive royal families of Bhutan, the Peoples’ representatives and Hon’ble Members sitting in the August Parliament of Bhutan for making efforts in giving priority to education. When you have moved forward, we feel that we should also come along with you in these efforts of yours.We feel that the children of Bhutan should also have an opportunity to know the whole world by getting connected with the modern technology through education. India has, therefore, decided to prepare a network of e-library in Bhutan which would enable the children to attain more knowledge. They would be able to equip themselves with knowledge and information about the whole world through such a technology. They would also be able to have access to the latest magazines of the world. I truly believe that your investment in education and the technological support provided by India shall

: 10 :

modernize the new generation and make them capable to walk along with the whole world in terms of growth and development.

Many Indian teachers came to Bhutan for imparting education during the initial years of development of education system in Bhutan,. They used to educate people while living in difficult regions. The nation which sends its teachers to educate the people of a country does not have the intention to expand its power. A country sending its teachers to another country has a bonafide intention of strengthening the roots of that country and it is for this genuine reason that since decades, India has been sending a large number of teachers to Bhutan. They have taught the earlier generations even while living a tough life here. This is nothing but a genuine expression of strengthening the roots of Bhutan. Going a step further the Government of India has also made arrangements for providing quality education to the bright students of Bhutan in the best Indian universities by awarding them high scholarships.

Before coming to this August Parliament, I had told the Hon’ble Prime Minister yesterday that we would double the amount of scholarships so that maximum students could get an opportunity to attain modern education. Similarly we shall have to explore new ways

: 11 :

to carry forward this noble cause. Since I decided to visit Bhutan, I have been thinking as to how to widen the scope of our relationship. I thought that all the Himalayan States of India and Bhutan including Nepal which, we hope, shall also join us, should organize a special sports event every year. We have states like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Assam that happen to be your neighbouring regions also and the people of these states do share the same kind of interests, thinking and way of living as those of the people of Bhutan.Through sports we would be able to bring another generation of both the nations closer to each other. India and all its states would consider this aspect and we also request you to think in this direction. With such sports events, we shall be meeting each other in different states of lndia and also in various regions of Bhutan which would inculcate a feeling of sportsmanship. The more we develop a spirit of sportsmanship with our neighbouring states and countries, the more it leads to an atmosphere of happiness in the society and is also useful in the formation of a healthy society. At the same time, it is also important for the children of India to know about Bhutan viz., what is the geography of Bhutan, what is her history, culture, traditions and what values they believe in. As Bhutan has

: 12 :

always been associated with India since the past, the new generation of Bhutan should also know what has been the basis of our relationship and what are the reasons behind such a bond since centuries. They should also know about the strong cultural traditions of India. Why not should we organize an annual quiz competition between the children of Bhutan and India through modern science and technology? We can organize big events in which the youth of both the sides may acquire knowledge about each other and prepare themselves for quiz competition and obtain positions.

I have observed that many people in Bhutan can understand Hindi as they go to India in large numbers for their studies and studying in India becomes more convenient for them if they get acquainted with the Hindi language in the initial period of their studies. We can also think in the direction of widening the scope of this aspect. We can also consider if the satellite technology of lndia can prove to be useful in the development process of Bhutan? Or that India can extend any further help to Bhutan through its space technology. Our scientists should consider this aspect and hold meetings with the Bhutanese people to see as to how we can make efforts to connect

: 12 :

both the countries and develop our relationship through space sciences.

Sometimes people say that the Himalaya mountains separates us. This is just a way of thinking. I have a different way of looking at things and I feel that Himalaya does not separate us, rather it unites us. The Himalaya is a common heritage of India and Bhutan. People on both the sides of Himalaya have the same feeling of love and affection for it. Both of the countries have the same feeling of respect and pride for the Himalaya. And the Himalaya happens to be a source of power for both the countries. The Himalaya has benefitted both the nations. Now the time demands that a new scientific study of the Himalayan ranges should be undertaken in terms of climate and its natural resources. India has thought over this aspect as to how to benefit the future generations with the natural resources and in this regard we have prepared two plans - first, the National Action Plan for Climate Change and second, National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Eco System. which India is considering very seriously But India alone can not do it. All the neighbouring countries should collectively come forward in this direction as we intend to do something in this regard. Our Government has also decided to take

: 13 :

one more initiative regarding opening of a Central University of Himalayan Studies in which we are thinking of introducing topics like, life of the people in Himalaya its natural resources, the Climate Change witnessed by the Himalaya and scope of its benefits to the humankind under one ‘focussed subject’. I feel that this would also benefit you to a great extent.

Bhutan is becoming a desired tourist destination. If we look into the history of the world, we would find that very few peoplemade adventurous journeys to other regions of the world as a tourist. We find a mention of travelers like Hieun Tsang from China or Vasco-de-gama. In the history of every country, we find one or two great personalities who, centuries back, had dared to venture and explore new areas in the world facing great difficulties. Since then, till date, tourism has successfully linked the past with the present. Tourism has been successful in connecting one part of the world with the other. Tourism has also brought people of one region closer to those of another region. A meaningful tourism has the potential of uniting the whole world. I am of the opinion that terrorism divides but tourism unites. And considering this potential of tourism, I feel that Bhutan has the natural beauty and resources to attract tourists. India and Bhutan

: 14 :

can collectively make a holistic approach in attracting the tourists of the world. We can consider this thought in our future endeavors. We can think over the fact that how we canmake a package tour programme of the north- eastern part of India and Bhutan by making a common circuit of the Himalayan ranges attracting the people towards the Himalaya. Tourism is such an area which invites minimum capital investment and maximum employment to the people. Development of tourism industry leads to increase in the income of the poorest people. We have to find out the ways as to how we can collectively work for the growth of tourism industry. If the Indian expertise on tourism combines with the natural resources of Bhutan, it would be very effective in attracting the whole world to come to Bhutan and the north- eastern part of India. I firmly believe that if we make any plan in this regard in the future, it would be in the interest of both the countries.

Yesterday, I felt very happy to know about the precedents established by your Parliament. Your Speaker runs the Parliament well under the established rules. I am told that if an Hon’ble Member has been given an opportunity to speak for five minutes and s/he exceeds those five minutes even by ten seconds, then the last ten

: 15 :

seconds are not recorded. This is a very good practice. So, now every Member shall have to speak within the prescribed time. We, in India would also try to learn and adopt such a practice in our Parliament. Your Parliament is a very young Parliament but in this short period of time the new rules that you have introduced in the Parliamentary system should be well understood and applied by all. I wish that all of you should have people to people contact with India. Formal relations between Governments of both the countries will always be there at state level, but we want to have a closer bond amongst the people of both the countries. I feel that the more we meet each other or visit each other’s country, the more shall we develop a strong relationship with one another.

Technology, in the present times, has transformed the whole world into a global village. In a fraction of second, we can have access to even the farthest part of the world and send our views and opinions to the world as also can have the view points of others. Hence this new form of science is also uniting us. Due to the continuous efforts of Indian and Bhutanese Government, the present generation of India and Bhutan have become computer literate and techno savvy. This will prove to be very productive and beneficial in the future. A wholistic

: 16 :

development, combined with happiness and prosperity is our main objective. Today I got this opportunity to speak to all of you and so, I assure you that the relationship between India and Bhutan is a never ending relationship. Our relationship does not depend upon the Governmental set-ups in our respective countries. This relationship is that of the cultural heritage that we share with each other. We can not divide the ‘water’ with whatever intensity we strike on it. Similarly the ‘oneness’ of the common cultural heritage of India and Bhutan can not be divided.

When I was gathering information with regard to Bhutan, I came to know about a very good fact that the Third King of Bhutan had sent a very good message regarding their relationship with India. He had stated that the relationship between India and Bhutan is like ‘milk and water’, meaningthereby, once milk is mixed with water they can not be separated, similar is the relationship between India and Bhutan. We are maintaining the same tradition even today. When I went through this message of the Third King of Bhutan, it reminded me of an incident of the State that I hail from in India. Four hundred years ago, there was a Hindu King called ‘Jidurana’ who ruled that territory. The Persians, who happen to be the smallest or the micro minority of the

: 17 :

world, migrated to this area. They were ousted from Iran, hence they came at the banks of Gujarat through the seaways. They wanted to have refuge in the territory ruled by Jidurana in Gujarat. Jidurana in return, sent a bowl full of milk sending an indirect message that there are already large number of people living in my territory hence I do not have space to give you shelter. When the Persians received the bowl full of milk, they sweetened the milk by adding sugar in it and returned the bowl as it is. On finding that the milk has become sweet, Jidurana immediately invited them from the seashore to his Territory. I have given this example for the reason that the incident that took place 400 years back in which the Persians used good words and showed a good gesture, resembles the example of ‘milk and water’ given by the Third King of Bhutan. How similar these two incidents are! This micro minority – the Persian Community has advanced in all the fields of development in India and the whole world. Relationship between India and Bhutan is the same and this relationship, I believe shall also attain new heights in every field in the times to come.

I congratulate the people of Bhutan. Yesterday, the welcome and honour given by the enthusiastic and energetic people of Bhutan in the entire stretch of 50 kms. from the Airport to this place was

: 18 :

overwhelming. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the people of Bhutan.I am, once again thankful to all of you for inviting me to Bhutan and giving me an opportunity to speak to you. I also extend my thanks to the Royal Family for welcoming and honouring me. Once again I extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you.