

“I am delighted to launch ‘The Midway Battle’, a timely book by Shri Gautam Chintamani that offers insight into India’s eventful journey during recent years. It brings forth where India, the world’s largest democracy, started seven-and-half decades ago and how we stand at the point from where we are moving forward with a strong faith in ourselves to become a global leader.

As India enters its 75th year of independence, we look at our journey and ask ourselves many questions. For an ancient civilisation and a young nation like India, answers to questions such as ‘have we lived our destiny?’, ‘have we progressed?’ are never simple. The test of our actual progress is not how much we have added to our abundance; it is whether we have provided enough to those who have too little. India has always been the place that has inspired the world.

Writing contemporary history is never an easy task. Being witness to something as transformational as the change in the lives of 1.3 billion people or one-seventh of humanity can risk oversight. It is an all-important task as chroniclers of the present can better understand what is going on than future historians. Our nation has made great strides since the turn of this century. It had often been envisioned that the 21st century could be India’s century. The last few years have borne great witness to transforming the lives of the average Indian and both empowering and enabling them to deliver on their potential. Be it life expectancy, financial inclusion, access to healthcare, employment, owning a house, or honouring entrepreneurial ability, the quality of Indian lives is getting better with each passing day.

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has given a three word mantra – reform, perform and transform. In this spirit, every sector in the country today is witnessing an unprecedented change and reform. In the last seven years, setting a world record in financial inclusion, more than 430 million people have been connected to the banking system in India. Over the same period, more than 360 million, most of them from underprivileged backgrounds, have been provided insurance cover, 87 million women from Below Poverty Line households have been given LPG connections and 52 million households supplied with tap water connection. Stating these statistics is one thing, but comprehending how these pro-poor and people-centric initiatives affect and change people’s lives is entirely different.

In the true spirit of ‘minimum government and maximum governance’, the Government is leveraging technologies to bring transformation in every sector. Digitisation of processes has not only plugged leakages in welfare schemes but has also made people’s lives a lot easier and hassle free. With concerted efforts like Start-up India, Stand-up India and Mudra loans, India has become the third largest startup ecosystem in the world. The pace of progress is such that over the last one year, India has added three unicorns every month. It is a testimony to the government’s resolute commitment to improve the business environment in the country that India rose from 142nd position in 2014 to 63rd place in World bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index 2020.

Dear friends,

There are still many challenges in our path but challenges are nothing new for us. Our freedom fighters toiled selflessly to break the chains that bound us to an imperial power, and our founding fathers laid the foundation on which we could rebuild our civilisational heritage. Since independence, every time we took a step forward, bigger obstacles were placed in our path. Yet nothing could deter us from the path of progress and humanity. This is why India’s success is the success of the world. We have always believed in the philosophy of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ – the whole world as one family.

Sisters and brothers,

Many doubted our potential. Many still question our ability, but the world has time and again seen how India sets big goals and achieves them. The Coronavirus pandemic has come as a big challenge for the entire human race, and India's efforts during the pandemic have changed the way the world looks at us. The world's largest free covid vaccination drive is currently underway in India. We have already crossed the 125 Crore vaccination landmark milestone a few days ago and this is an example of how nothing is impossible when India sets its mind.

Dear friends,

The emergence of a new coronavirus strain has created renewed fears in people's minds. I would advise people not to panic but remain vigilant and keep following COVID appropriate behaviour. I also urge everyone to shed hesitancy, if any, and get themselves vaccinated at the earliest. Together, with everybody's cooperation, we will certainly be able to defeat this pandemic.

'The Midway Battle' is a commendable effort by Shri Gautam Chinatamani. I believe it will give all of us, especially my younger fellow Indians, an understanding of how this period is a great challenge for us. India stands at a point where it has left the doubts of the past behind and is looking as far ahead as possible with greater realisation of its beliefs. The recent past has made all Indians believe that it is possible to reimagine and witness India emerge as a self-reliant world leader. At the same time, the geopolitical changes in the aftermath of COVID-19 have made the world rethink our position – we are no longer an afterthought. Our commitment to upholding democratic values and respect for all lives continues to shine. India's strategic partnerships, both new and old, are based on mutual respect and are a joint effort to safeguard each other from the race of expansion and exclusion. We are guided by our unwavering self-belief and our dedication to becoming 'atma-nirbhar' in every possible way. Even in the shadow of a global pandemic, the kind of which has not been seen in a hundred years, India stood firm against enemies known and unseen. We have given a resolute response to inimical forces who dared to challenge our integrity and sovereignty.

Shri Gautam's book also puts into perspective what lies ahead for the world's largest democracy. India's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sakba Prayas' is looking at the world as a whole, we believe in taking the world together. Our challenges are not over. The more self-reliant, powerful, and inspirational India becomes, the greater the challenges that we will face. I do not doubt in my heart and mind that the willpower of 1.3 billion people together can overcome every challenge, and no obstacle can stop us from realising our dreams and aspirations.

I urge all stakeholders including the private sector, educational institutions, youth and civil society to come together and join this Maha-Yajna of creating a self-reliant, prosperous, happy and strong India. Let us make India a 'Vishwaguru' once again.

Jai Hind!"
