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From my birth place in a little village in the foothills of Kashmir part of the Himalayas, its been a long journey to New Zealand Parliament. My parents were peasant farmers who never had the opportunity to go to a school because there was none available within walking distance in rural British India. They worked their few acres of land and toiled hard to put me through school and university. Whether it was under the blazing sun of summer, down-pour of the monsoon, or freezing winter mornings of the foothills of the Himalayas, a daily round trip on foot of about 13 km was standard routine for me in my high school days.

For my parents, the decision to put me through university was probably one of the hardest financial decisions to make in those days. Being the eldest, and probably the one who had the best academic leaning, I got the nod to study at the University. This meant that my brothers and sisters were not able to go for higher education, as they had to help the family to work the land and support my study. Without their toil and sacrifices I would neither be a scientist of international standing, nor a member of the House Representatives in New Zealand.

Following completion of my Master's degree in England, an offer of a fellowship landed me at Massey University in 1976, where I completed my PhD.

I chose to stay in New Zealand because this is a wonderful place to live, where everyone has same opportunity to succeed, and society is generally fair, tolerant and inclusive. Demographic diversity in New Zealand is adding to the strength of our emerging nationhood.

New Zealand is still largely an agricultural-based economy. But the sustainability of agricultural production, the quality of the living environment, air and water quality, and eroding biodiversity is a major concern. While our major source of export income is from agriculture, this is unsustainable in the long term. It is a well-established fact that reducing living standards have been closely linked with lack of diversification from agricultural economies. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us, on the one hand, to further process and add value to our agricultural products for export, and at the same time, double our efforts to build knowledge-based economy over next twenty years.

New Zealand's future is bright with the promise of our knowledge-based economy and innovative industry, particularly in biotechnology and information technology. The challenge is to develop integrated capability for discovery and exploitation of novel bioactors and materials from plants and micro-organisms which offer opportunities for biotechnologies, healthcare and food-based export-oriented biomedical and pharmaceutical enterprises. This supports the advanced capability development strategic objectives based on the discoveries made in plant genetic, molecular and cellular level research.

Further, we need science-based innovation for new technology enterprise development. This would require R & D and incubators for high-risk technologies essential to respond to emerging markets opportunities. There is a need to foster technology clustering & entrepreneurship development, which allows technology convergence.

Internationally, New Zealand is very well respected for its caring attitude for others. Whether it is peace-keeping duties, assistance for development programmes, promotion of human rights and good governance, or protection of the environment, New Zealand is always in the forefront. I am proud of New Zealand's leadership in the promotion of nuclear-free world, and healthy environments. New Zealand often carries more weight than its size.

Wars cannot end terrorism. Nations have been destroyed by war. Has the world eliminated terrorism? Not at all. Is there a solution? One of the solutions to terrorism is for people to become "enlightened human beings". When there is a vision for nations with focused mission, problems like terrorism and violence will be eliminated.

Because of their special status as indigenous people and equal treaty partner, Maoris need to be fully represented in the parliament, local government and other key institutions in the country. This needs to be accomplished either through constitutional framework, or multi-party endorsement such that Maori representation reflects the population demographics at the minimum.

A country like New Zealand with its Head of the State residing the other side of the world is like a grown up adult whose umbilical cord is still attached to his/her mother. I trust by 2020 the very diverse 'Republic of Aotearoa/New Zealand' will have reduced dependency or emotional attachment to its colonial past. I believe that while the elected government (Kawaratanga, Article 1 of the Treaty) should always reflect the will of the majority, the appointment of Maori as constitutional Head of the State may largely satisfy Maori aspiration to the retention and maintenance of the Chieftainship (Te Tino Rangatiratanga, Article 2 of the Treaty).

My vision for New Zealand in 2020 is that the country is at peace with itself, where people are more tolerant and value differences. While we should be proud to maintain our respective cultural traditions and languages, we are all New Zealanders-one nation, two partners and many people. We need not be afraid of diversity, but use it as strength. To achieve harmony we must forge partnerships between various sectors of society and provider agencies. We must find ways to assist highly qualified migrants and diverse ethnic communities, a very mobile asset, to find employment or business opportunities and integrate into our society. Nothing settles better a migrant than finding an appropriate employment.

A majority of our people has their roots and heritage in Europe. But we live in the Asia Pacific region, which is our playground. We cannot live in continuous denial. On the contrary, we should be proud of our uniqueness and exploit this to our great advantage. We need to mark our place in the powering economies of the Asia Pacific. I look forward to a productive, environmentally sound and sustainable economy well integrated with our neighbors in Asia and the Pacific. A prosperous society at peace with itself will bring about a fair, just, equitable and harmonious New Zealand.

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