



Address

by

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Government of India

delivered  
at the

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of the  
Pacific Asia Travel Association**

at

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Respected Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji, Hon'ble Chairman of Pacific Asia Travel Association, Distinguished President of World Travel and Tourism Council and Secretary General of World Tourism Organisation, excellencies and delegates,

1. It is my privilege to welcome you all to this prestigious Conference which is being held in New Delhi after a gap of 24 years. The presence of Hon'ble Prime Minister and other distinguished dignitaries have added special lustre to it. We look forward to a highly fruitful deliberation and a rewarding outcome.

### **Tourism Revolution**

2. Distinguished friends, the Pacific Asia Travel Association has been playing a great role in promoting travel and tourism, not only in the regions which it covers but also all over the globe. It is because of the efforts of the organisations like this Association that the world has witnessed a Tourism Revolution, particularly in the last four decades of the twentieth century. In 1964, the number of tourists leaving their homes, worldwide, was 100 million. This number increased to 200 million in 1974; 500 million in 1992; and 700 million in 2001.

3. Unfortunately, a huge spanner was thrown in the wheel of this Revolution on September 11, 2001. The general slow-down of the economy has been another impediment. But I have no doubt that these obstructions



would be short-lived and Tourism Revolution would soon regain its momentum and attain further acceleration. Unfavourable winds, sometimes, come only to remind us of the evils that lurk around us and to create a stronger determination to fight and end them.

### Turning Point

4. Distinguished friends, we have just begun our journey in the twenty-first century. At this turning point in the time-frame of human history, it would be wise to look simultaneously at the past, present and future and reflect upon the opportunities that we have missed in the past and the opportunities that we could now seize to create, through travel and tourism, a better world – a world free from poverty, hunger and disease, a world in which both the landscape and the mindscape rear-up true joy and happiness. In this connection, may I take the liberty of inviting your attention to what great English Poet, T.S. Eliot said:

“Time present and time past  
Are both present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past...  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened...”

### Potential

5. In the second half of the last century, one of the doors that we could have opened but did not open and

one of the passages that we could have taken but did not take were the ones which would have enabled us to tap the beneficial potential of travel and tourism to the full. For tourism is not merely leisure or entertainment or physical invigoration or mental rejuvenation. It could also serve as a potent instrument for eliminating poverty, for ending unemployment, for promoting dialogue among civilisations and for providing channels in which streams of different cultures could meet and mingle and create a new ethicscape on which a fair, just, humane and enlightened order could be built for the entire human race – an order which recognises the integral unity of the Cosmo and the Mother Earth, respects the principles of sustainability and treats the natural and cultural wealth of the nations as a common heritage of Man.

### Features of the Contemporary World

6. If we look at the contemporary world, we would be struck by quite a few of its distinct features. For facility of comprehension, I would divide these features into the following seven categories:

- i) Rapid expansion in the frontiers of human knowledge;
- ii) Unprecedented pace of the ongoing scientific, technological and convergence revolution;
- iii) Remarkable upswing in the affluence of a few countries;



- iv) Growth of humanitarian consciousness through the United Nations agencies and increasing realisation of the importance of preserving environment and ecology;
- v) Rising disparities of income and resource distribution;
- vi) Concentration of power in fewer hands; and
- vii) Extremely limited success of United Nations agencies in securing conversion of their declarations into deeds.

7. Let me elaborate briefly each of these features.

#### *Expansion of Human Knowledge*

8. Of late, human knowledge has been doubling every ten years. Information, communication and digital technologies are moving forward and converging very fast. The power of the computer is doubling every eighteen months and that of Internet every year. Both time and distance have been virtually conquered and the countries and the communities are coming closer and closer.

#### *Technological Revolution*

9. There has also been a mind-boggling revolution in Science and Technology. Much more is now known about distant meadows, mountains, streams and seas. Hitherto unexplored areas could be easily reached and

enjoyed without any risk. Never before in history have such profound, dramatic and all-pervasive improvements taken place.

#### *Affluence*

10. There has also been a remarkable upswing in the affluence and economic development of quite a few countries. This should be clear from the fact that the world consumption has expanded at an unprecedented pace over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with private and public consumption expenditure reaching \$ 24 trillion in 1998, twice the level of 1975 and six times that of 1950.

#### *Humanitarian Consciousness*

11. Whatever be the limitation of the United Nations and its agencies, they have certainly helped in making the international community more sensitive to the problems of environment, ecology, poverty and human rights. The fragility of the eco-system is being increasingly recognised and realisation is dawning that the world would not be a healthy and happy place to live in if it continues to move in the same direction as hitherto before.

#### *Disparities*

12. Today, the disparities have become so acute that 20 per cent of the world's people have got 86 per cent of the world's GNP. As against this, the bottom 20 per cent



of the people are compelled to live with an income of only \$ 1 a day.

### *Concentration*

13. The last ten years have seen an increasing concentration of income, resources and wealth in a small segment of the people. The ratio between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and fifth in the poorest, which was 30 to 1 in 1960, has increased to 74 to 1 in 1997.

### *Limited Success*

14. By and large, the United Nations and its agencies have so far not been able to change the ground level realities in poor countries. Even today, there are 1.4 billion people who are absolutely poor. About 1.7 billion people go without pure water supply and about 3 billion have no access to sanitary facilities. In cities alone, about 600 million people are either homeless or living in what the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements has described as a "life and health threatening environment".

### *Challenges*

15. It would be noticed that, for creating a better world, the first four features would constitute a set of positive forces and the last three as a set of negative forces. Is it, therefore, not incumbent upon us to shape the future course of travel and tourism industry in such

a manner that the positive forces are strengthened and the negative forces are eliminated?

16. The challenge, as I see it, is to encourage attitude and trends and evolve policies and programmes which would substantially increase the flow of tourists from affluent to non-affluent countries, cause reduction in the disparities of income and resource-distribution and, through closer and more frequent contacts, create deeper understanding and sympathy for those who continue to be the victims of economic deprivation and environmental disruption. The challenge is also to give a pre-eminent place to the smokeless industry of eco-tourism which, besides engendering love for natural beauty and elevating aspects of life, would create new skills and capacities at the level of local communities and help in preserving history and heritage in all its shape and colours.

### *Nobler Civilisation*

17. If we accept these challenges and tackle them successfully, we would not only provide a tremendous boost to travel and tourism industry but also extend a strong helping hand in creation of a better world and a nobler civilisation in the twenty-first century.

### *Our Effort*

18. We, in India, are trying to open hitherto closed doors and find new passages. Our overall effort is to

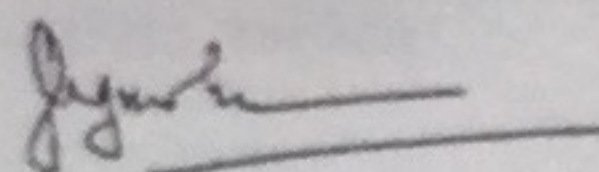


present to the world the wonder that is India – wonder not only in terms of beauties and bounties of nature but also in terms of an ancient civilisation that was born, bred and beckoned here. We are laying down an enchanting network of 572 nature-endowed areas – 89 national parks and 483 wild-life sanctuaries – and 3606 protected monuments.

19. We are also not forgetting to make our contribution to the fashioning out of a *New Design for Life in the twenty-first century* – a design whose foundations rest not only on equity, justice and economic prosperity for all but also on the inner urges that tend to lift us upward and look to the divine, a design that should make us believe: *"Life is a journey, complete it; Life is an opportunity, utilize it; and Life is a dream, realize it"*.

#### A Question

20. Should we not all dream today for a better tomorrow through the instrumentality of travel and tourism and start working for the realisation of this dream straightaway? This is a question that this august Conference may like to ponder over.



(JAGMOHAN)