

Ambassador's Remarks on Felicitation of Fareed Zakaria at a Reception in New York on 4th August 2010

I am delighted to join this celebration to honour Fareed Zakaria on a richly deserved Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award in India, given to him for his contribution to journalism. It is awarded to recognize distinguished service of a high order to the nation, in any field. While the overwhelming majority of recipients are from India, it is by no means restricted to Indians or people of Indian origin. I am pleased to say that the United States increasingly finds itself on the annual roster of Padma awardees, which speaks to the contribution that the people here are making to India and India-US relations. I think rarely does any one so young as Fareed get the Padma Bhushan. My warmest congratulations to you!

In the India of my youth, Fareed's father, Dr. Rafeeq Zakaria was a force of idealism, integrity and intellect in public life and a great symbol of pluralism and secularism - all attributes that helped steer a young nation through the turbulence of partition and the extraordinary challenges of nation-building and development.

Your life and your success, Fareed, epitomizes the globalised character of our world. But, it is also a testimony, I dare say, to the genius of Indians; to the possibilities that open up in an environment that stimulates and rewards creativity and skills; and, above all, to the comfort that Indians and Americans, nurtured in democracy and diversity, feel in each other's country.

With an absolutely superb academic record, you have gone on to bridge the world of academics, journalism and political commentary in a way that has put across your thoughts and ideas on the important challenges of our times to a really wide global audience. What impresses me the most is your ability to go beyond the obvious to perceive subtle trends, see the big picture and connect the big ideas, and present them in a disarmingly simple way.

Fareed, your personal experiences and intellectual brilliance make you an important voice for the twenty-first century. India is a microcosm of our world, where just about every facet of human trial and triumphs are played out. You have witnessed the problems of economic development; the impact of the economic unshackling of India; the demands of economic transition and growth; the challenges and the hope that we see in India's extraordinary diversity; the violence of terrorism; the experience of living in the world's most powerful country, with an abiding commitment to democracy and pluralism, but one that is facing its own challenges. All this has distilled a perspective that gives a sense of personal empathy with the issues you write on, and make your views very relevant to our present times. An enduring image of the importance of Fareed's work is the clipping of Candidate Obama walking with his book, "The Post-American World", with a finger tucked between the pages.

As an Indian, I can certainly say that you have brought a unique perspective, a personal touch and intellectual rigour to your writings and commentary on India. I have to thank you for bringing to the global audience the yet unnamed Indian version of the Ipad, likely to cost US

\$35, on last week's GPS. Your voice in the HBO documentary, "Terror in Mumbai" reflected personal pain at and a seasoned commentator's warning of a modern-day horror. You have on a number of occasions eloquently described the new India's energy and excitement, social changes and enduring legacies, enterprise and innovation, challenges and hopes, global responsibilities and regional threats. India's success will have a great impact in shaping the 21st century in terms of the ideals that our two countries share.

Fareed, you have, living in New York, interpreted a changing and rapidly growing India, to the world in a profoundly effective way. You have risen beyond narrow identities without losing your heritage, taken to the global stage without losing Mumbai.

We feel proud of you. Your journey is an inspiration in India and around the world. I wish you continuing success. I know the best years are still ahead of you.

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