The young, optimistic and idealistic will shape India at 100

Before Independence a young Nehru wrote: “If the future is to be envisaged at all, it is a future that is our own. We must make it.”

If the future is to be envisaged at all, it is a future that is our own. We must make it.

But I truly believe we are getting past the sell-by date for public displays of poverty, whether it comes to co-existing with nature, innovating inclusive markets or democratising economic opportunity. If we falter in democratising economic opportunity, if we succumb to a regime of austerity, or it can lead to jingoism, or it can leave some communities and geographies feeling excluded, demoted, treading on their traditions to innovate for a modern economy. At 75 years, India seems confident and poised for leadership in the world.

Meanwhile, there seems to be a cultural resurgence that has pulled millions of Indians back to roots, whether through the arts, heritage or craft. We have learnt so many lessons that when the next crisis comes around, we might be better prepared.

It is 75 years since we raised our own flag in our own country, reclaiming it for ever and for all. It is 75 years since we stood up, more. What a time for celebration. Here we are, a young democracy, alive with the promise of a free and noble people. After all, even if our public posturing may sometimes diverge, our genuine desire for a better India is shared by millions and millions.

As we celebrate the past, we also look ahead. What can we do, as a nation, as a country?

I often catch up with youth leaders around the country, and any anxiety I may feel about the future turns to hope. It is up to us, the diverse, vibrant samaj of India, to realise this country’s potential. It is up to us, the diverse, vibrant samaj of India, to realise this country’s potential.

We have to learn the lessons of the last two years, when the unprecedented inter-sector collaboration can do wonders.

There was a culture of jingoism that needed to be internalised, to realise that our fates are entwined. The elite, especially, cannot go on ignoring the very young or the very old, or the very poor or the very sick.

If we falter in democratising economic opportunity, if we succumb to a regime of austerity, or it can lead to jingoism, or it can leave some communities and geographies feeling excluded, demoted, treading on their traditions to innovate for a modern economy.

What a time for celebration. Here we are, a young democracy, alive with the promise of a free and noble people.