

# Prime Minister Narendra Modi: My friend, my brother, my mentor

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Today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaches a historic milestone, becoming the longest-serving elected Prime Minister of India in continuous office, completing 4,399 days since first assuming this responsibility on 26 May 2014. For India, this is a moment of historic significance. For the world, it reflects the confidence that the people of the world's largest democracy have repeatedly placed in a leader who has guided their nation through a transformative period.

For me, however, this occasion is more than a political milestone. It is an opportunity to reflect on a relationship that has evolved over the years—one that I value deeply. I have come to know Prime Minister Modi as a friend, regard him as an elder brother, and look up to him as a mentor whose dedication to public service continues to inspire me.

## My Friend

Politics and diplomacy are often described as being built on national interests and institutional relationships. While this is true, the strongest and most enduring partnerships between nations are also nurtured by genuine human connections and friendships founded on trust and mutual respect.

I first met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, when I had the privilege of attending his swearing-in ceremony as Prime Minister of India. From that very first meeting, his warmth and graciousness left a lasting impression on me. What began as an official interaction soon evolved into a personal friendship that I have come to value deeply over the years.

Soon thereafter, Prime Minister Modi chose Bhutan as the destination of his first overseas visit after assuming office. That decision carried a powerful message about the importance he attached to the special ties between our two countries. It reaffirmed the deep bonds of goodwill and shared destiny that connect our peoples and reflected the affection and re-

gard he has always held for Bhutan.

In all my interactions with him, what has consistently stood out is his sincerity, humility, and remarkable ability to connect with people, regardless of their position or background. Despite the immense responsibilities of leading the world's largest democracy and serving more than a billion people, he never loses sight of the importance of personal relationships.

Our conversations over the years have ranged from matters of state and development to the opportunities and challenges confronting our societies. Through these exchanges, I have come to appreciate not only his intellect and strategic foresight, but also his kindness, sense of humour, and genuine concern for the welfare of others.

Despite his demanding schedule, he has always enquired about my family, especially my children, and often shared his insights on food, healthy eating, exercise, and yoga. These conversations have enriched a friendship that has grown steadily alongside our official engagements.

True friendship is built on trust, respect, and mutual understanding. These qualities have defined my relationship with Prime Minister Modi and have long underpinned the unique and enduring partnership between Bhutan and India.

The people of Bhutan have always regarded India as our closest friend and most trusted partner. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, this friendship has grown from strength to strength, marked by mutual support, understanding, and a shared vision for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of our peoples.

## My Elder Brother

In our part of the world, the term *Barai Bhai* or elder brother signifies far more than an elder sibling. It evokes affection, trust, guidance, and protection. It describes someone who encourages you

when challenges seem overwhelming, celebrates your successes as his own, and offers wisdom when difficult decisions must be made.

It is in this spirit that I have often thought of Prime Minister Modi.

Over the years, in moments of both celebration and challenge, I have experienced this generosity of spirit firsthand. Whether discussing matters of national importance or Bhutan's aspirations for the future, he has always listened with patience, shared his thoughts candidly, and extended support with the affection and reassurance of an elder brother. His encouragement has often reinforced my own conviction during demanding moments of public life.

Prime Minister Modi may be older than me in years, but the significance of *Barai Bhai* goes far beyond age. It is rooted in the confidence that one can seek counsel without hesitation and receive it with sincerity and goodwill. Throughout my years of public service, I have found in him not only a trusted friend but also someone whose perspective is valuable, whose guidance is thoughtful, and whose support is steadfast.

## My Mentor

Perhaps the aspect of Prime Minister Modi that I admire most is his extraordinary dedication to public service.

Leadership is not merely about occupying high office. It is about commitment, discipline, and an unwavering focus on improving the lives of others. Prime Minister Modi exemplifies these qualities.

For more than a decade, he has carried the immense responsibilities of leading one of the world's most populous and diverse nations. Yet what stands out is not merely the scale of those responsibilities, but the energy, discipline, and consistency with which he approaches them. More than a decade into office, his commitment to serving the people of India remains undiminished by time or circumstance.

As a fellow public servant,

I have often drawn inspiration from his example. His work ethic, attention to detail, and relentless pursuit of results demonstrate what can be achieved when leadership is guided by purpose and conviction. He has shown that transformative change requires not only vision, but also perseverance and the courage to pursue long-term goals.

Under his leadership, India has expanded its economic influence, embraced technological innovation, strengthened its infrastructure, and elevated its standing in global affairs. Equally important, he has emerged as a strong voice for the aspirations of developing countries and the Global South, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable international order.

These achievements are the product of a leader who views public office not as a privilege, but as a profound responsibility.

## A Historic Milestone

As Prime Minister Modi reaches this historic milestone, it is fitting to recognize not only the length of his tenure but also the impact of his service.

Few democratic leaders have had the opportunity to shape their nations over such an extended period. Fewer still have done so while continuously earning the trust and confidence of their people. His record reflects not only political longevity, but also the enduring strength of democratic legitimacy.

History will assess Prime Minister Modi's legacy in many ways. It will record the transformation of India during his tenure, the country's growing influence on the global stage, and the aspirations he helped ignite among millions of people.<sup>3</sup>

For me, however, his legacy is also personal. I will remember him as a trusted friend whose warmth transcends official protocol; as *Barai Bhai*, an elder brother whose guidance and support I deeply cherish; and as a mentor whose dedication

to public service serves as an enduring example for leaders everywhere.

Yet what will perhaps be remembered most fondly by the people of Bhutan is the unwavering support and goodwill he has extended to our entire nation. Time and again, Prime Minister Modi has stood firmly beside Bhutan, responding to our needs with generosity, understanding, and genuine concern for the well-being of our people.

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty The King and with Prime Minister Modi's steadfast partnership, the friendship between Bhutan and India has continued to deepen, adapting to new aspirations while remaining firmly anchored in mutual trust and goodwill. His support has extended beyond Bhutan's immediate development priorities to embrace our long-term national aspirations. More recently, he has lent his wholehearted support to His Majesty The King's visionary Gelephu Mindfulness City initiative—a transformative undertaking designed to create opportunities for future generations of Bhutanese. In doing so, he has demonstrated an abiding faith in Bhutan's potential and in the Royal Vision that seeks to secure lasting peace, prosperity, and well-being for our people.

For this enduring partnership, for the friendship he has consistently shown our country, and for the support he has extended to Bhutan through the years, the people of Bhutan remain profoundly grateful.

On behalf of His Majesty The King, the Royal Government, the people of Bhutan, and from my own heart, I extend my warmest congratulations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on this remarkable achievement. May he continue to serve India with the same wisdom, energy, and commitment that have defined his years of distinguished service. And may the enduring friendship between Bhutan and India continue to flourish for generations to come.