

## **Moving together into a new century**

By Timothy J. Roemer, U.S. Ambassador to India

Historian and author H. G. Wells once wrote, "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history ... the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone, as a star." On my first morning in Orissa, I can already see how easy it would be to get lost in its vibrant history, in its exquisite temples and ancient monuments. But equally clear to me is Orissa's focus on the future. It is a forward-looking state, with a booming economy and rich human and natural resources. The colorful Orissan culture dates back more than 3,000 years, but like all of India today the state is striding quickly and powerfully into the future. During the past few years, Orissa has ranked above so many other states in average annual per capita income growth rates, and is actively seeking to boost its economy through investments in the mining, power, steel, and port sectors.

Just as Orissa looks to the future, the United States and India forge ahead into a bright future through our strong partnership based on mutual interests, shared values, and a warm friendship. Together, our two great democracies will shape the 21st century and meet the most pressing global challenges confronting our planet. We have pledged to work together to protect our citizens from terrorism, to develop trade and economic opportunities for Americans and Indians, to educate our future generations so they can solve the global challenges facing the world, and to invest in new technologies which will provide us with a sustainable and economically bright future.

To build this promising future, as the American Ambassador to India, I am particularly focused on education. This bilateral strategic partnership on education between the United States and India has never been stronger or more promising. Our governments are working to implement the Obama-Singh 21<sup>st</sup> Century Knowledge Initiative, which will further strengthen bonds between American and Indian universities, with a special focus on community colleges. We are also improving student scholarship programs and teacher training initiatives. And

together, we are working to better serve remote areas, expanding education's reach to the farthest corners of India. The fruits of this broad, powerful partnership and the effort to bring education and development to those who need it most can already be seen right here in Orissa. And much can be accomplished.

In Bhubaneswar, the Kalinga Relief and Charitable Trust has been selected to be one of India's first providers of the English Access Microscholarship Program. Through this program, 100 tribal boys and girls will be trained in English for two years. The hope is that this training, borne of U.S.-India cooperation, will help these socially and economically underprivileged young men and women to participate fully in Orissa's economic rise. During this trip to Orissa I will have the honor to visit this wonderful organization and meet the recipients of this scholarship, to recognize the great work that they are doing.

Along with economic growth comes an added demand for infrastructure, particularly water and sanitation services in urban areas. There is no doubt that basic sanitation and access to clean water are among the most important issues affecting human health and economic development across the world.

I underscore what President Barack Obama said in his inaugural address: "Let clean water flow." He was referring to the strong commitment the United States of America has to working with countries around the globe, including India, to ensure that people everywhere have access to clean and safe water.

In this spirit, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is championing an effort to address these systemic problems by attacking them from two different angles: first, working with local governments to effect policy and institutional reform. And second, working with local communities to develop powerful and inclusive solutions at the grassroots level.

A great example of this commitment in action can be found in Orissa, here in Bhubaneswar. I am very pleased to recognize that the U.S. Government has partnered in a highly effective water and sanitation infrastructure program for 12

different settlements, improving the lives of 17,000 people with a single project – and with sustainable, long-term solutions driven by the local community. During my trip I will visit this project to personally witness how benefits of our aid efforts are reaching some of Bhubaneswar's most vulnerable people.

The relationship between India and the U.S. is based, more than anything else, on the relationships and personal connections between our people. We have so much in common, so much to offer each other, and working together to provide clean water and a good education to the people who need it the most is an example of “the indispensable partnership” between our people.

The leaders of our two great democracies are committed to building a just, free, economically developed and environmentally sustainable world. The great Gandhiji said that we must be the change we wish to see. The dream to change the present and build a better future for all people is an ongoing generational effort, but it is not beyond our reach. Together we strive, one step at a time, and we can succeed in making this dream a reality.