

**Speech by High Commissioner
at the
Community reception
at
Hotel Hilton in Durban
Saturday, June 8, 2019**

Mr. Ravi Pillay, MEC for Finance, Provincial Government of Kwazulu Natal,

Mrs. Shameen Thakur Rajbansi, Leader of Minority Front and Member of Provincial Legislature of Kwazulu Natal

Mrs. Fawzia Peer, Deputy Mayor of eThekweni Municipality

Mr. Nirode Bramdaw, Honorary Consul of Mauritius,

Mrs. Ela Gandhi ji, Chairperson of Board of Gandhi Development Trust

Distinguished Members of the Audience, Ladies & Gentlemen

Good Evening, Namaste, Vanakkam, Salam Alaikum, Sat Sri Akal,
SANIBONANI

1. Thank you all for this wonderful reception in the beautiful city of Durban. My wife and I are delighted to be here in the rainbow city of South Africa, which I am told is a city with one of the largest Indian diasporas in the world.

2. Durban has close to a million people who trace their roots to India. India is the janmabhoomi of their forefathers. Durban also has thousands of Indian expats for whom South Africa is their karmabhoomi. But Indian or South African, young or old, Hindu or Muslim, Christian or Sikh, we are one community, tied together by a common history, heritage and culture.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Africa and India are among the world's oldest civilizations. The mighty waters of the Indian Ocean separate us. But its currents have carried goods, people, and ideas that created interactions that go back many centuries. Today, India and South Africa are key emerging economies, each with a vibrant mosaic of cultures, religions and languages that have influenced each other.

4. This year is a very special year for both India and South Africa. It is the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and also the 100th commemorative year of Madiba's birth. I urge all of you to wholeheartedly join in the various celebrations we have planned to honour a precious and cherished legacy.

5. The first Indians who arrived in South Africa came to work on plantations. They brought with them the values that would come to define successive generations of pravasi bharatiyas - honesty, a strong work ethic and peaceful coexistence with their neighbours. They won respect for themselves and for their motherland. They were followed by enterprising businessmen and traders.

6. Today's pravasis come as software engineers, managers, doctors and bankers. They are in high demand not only for their professional skills but because they adapt easily and live and work comfortably in multicultural environments. And whether it is a modern nation, the global market or a global corporation – they increasingly look like rainbows.

7. We are greatly proud of the achievements of NRIs who have contributed to building a strong and prosperous India. During the 1990s when our software revolution started taking roots, it was driven by Indian engineers who had migrated into Silicon Valley. We have come a long way since then and our global IT connect reaches to every part of the world. And for that we have to thank the talented professionals, who like many of you, left India's shores to mark India's footprint in the global economy.

8. At one time, we used to be known for keeping our heads down and living and working in the shadows. But today Indian communities have become prosperous and resourceful. They seek a greater voice in the running of the countries they live in. It is hardly surprising that pravasi bharatiyas are increasingly visible in high positions in different countries. The Prime Minister of Ireland, Leo Varadkar and the Prime Minister of Portugal, Antonio Costa are only two among many world leaders who trace their family origins to India.

9. The rise of India is visibly manifest in the growing presence of Indian multinationals. Our companies, just like the pravasi bharatiyas are seeking their fortunes in all four corners of the globe. In IT, pharma, mining and many other sectors, our companies are recognized brand names in global markets. I read sometime back that there is today more Indian investment into the UK than there is investment from UK into India! In the process, Indian companies are creating growth, business and employment both in India and in the countries they operate in.

10. In South Africa too, there are more than 150 Indian companies with an investment of around USD 8-10 billion. These include a fair number of medium and small Indian companies, who are also becoming global competitors. Indian companies employ more than 20,000 South African nationals. They are good corporate citizens and their activities have contributed to South African industry and society at large.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. Education is a value held dear by Indians everywhere. We have thousands of years of experience in educating our children, beginning with the Gurukul system. We are deeply proud of this tradition that has produced business leaders like Sunder Pichai, CEO of Google and Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft. I urge the youth of this country to make full use of our higher education and the scholarships that are available. You not only connect with your roots but also increase your employability

because of your familiarity with two key emerging markets - India and South Africa.

12. It is India's education system that has helped to produce innovators and innovations that are quite unique. One such innovation for which India is known is frugal innovation.

13. In 2014, India successfully launched the Mars Orbiter Mission or Mangalyan - on its first attempt and at a cost of US \$ 74 million. This was less than the budget of the Hollywood film Gravity and a fraction of the US \$ 670 million that the US space agency NASA spent on its own Mars Mission. Gone also are the days when Indian satellites were launched from other countries. Today ISRO has developed capabilities across the space spectrum.

14. Let me take another example. Indian doctors are renowned world wide. An open heart surgery that could cost up to US \$ 150,000 in the United States would cost only about US \$ 3,000 to US \$ 10,000 in the best hospitals in India. Cosmetic surgeries, eye operations, and dental procedures cost many times more in western countries when compared to India. That's why you see many foreigners in the waiting rooms of our top hospitals. They come to India for world-class health care at affordable prices. India's experience has important lessons for developing countries, including South Africa.

Friends,

15. To my South African brothers and sisters of Indian origin, I say to you that you can be loyal and good citizens of South Africa even as you honour your roots, cherish your inherited culture and maintain a sense of community. That is why this beautiful country is called a rainbow nation. I invite all of you to visit India to see its many splendours, to exploit its many business opportunities and to honour your ancestors whose journey to this country made many of you what you are today.

Jai Hind, Jai South Africa.
