



Plenary Session

with Minister of External Affairs

Address by the Chairman of the Session, Dr L M Singhvi

Our Distinguished Minister for External Affairs, the Distinguished Panel, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the good fortune of chairing the session. We have two very distinguished co-chairmen. And therefore without much ado on the issue of forging a constructive relationship, let us begin.

I, like my distinguished fellow Co-Chairmen, Sir Shridath Ramphal, Former Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and my good friend, Prof Lord Bhikhu Parekh of the House of Lords in UK, to say a few words, to preface the discussions that we are about to begin. I should like to introduce to you all the distinguished panellists here. Of course, the gentleman sitting to my left needs no introduction. He, in fact, is our host, Shri Yashwant Sinha who has lent his strongest support to this initiative and who has been steering this initiative to a fruitful dialogue and fruitful results.

We have Sir Shridath Ramphal and Professor Lord Bhikhu Parekh who are both co-chairing. Their lives have been the lives of great achievement. Sir Shridath belongs to my fraternity of law and I met him first when he was the Chancellor in Guyana. But no one in the Indian diaspora is unaware of the seminal contribution he has made as a statesman and as the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

Professor Lord Bhikhu Parekh is a kind of a guru, or an Acharya on diaspora affairs. He has contributed an enormous quantity of intellectual substance to concepts relating to the Indian diaspora and has been hailed throughout the world as a great professor and as a living legend of the academia. We are fortunate to have with us the distinguished His Excellency Dato' Seri S Samy Vellu, Minister of Works in Malaysia. He is like Sir Sunny, also a recipient of the great affectionate accolades of India to its illustrious sons.

We have Shri Mewa Ramgobin, Member of Parliament in South Africa. They have done India proud and they have done because of freedom of human societies. We have with us also Dr Ram. Dr Ram was the Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Ambassador in many different countries. He has made a contribution to the shaping of Indian policies of many years. We are very fortunate to have him as a rapporteur.

I am delighted, if I may say so, to have on the dais a very dear and distinguished friend on whom I can always count and that is Shri Digvijay Singh, Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs. But what is more important he is a man of all seasons and he is a man of the diaspora concerns. He has done much for the propagation of culture of India throughout the diaspora and now heads responsibility also for Vishwa Hindi Sammelan, which will be held in Surinam, where Hindi has been preserved beautifully, from June 5 to 9.

Shri Jesu Shenoy sits at the end of this dais and he has been the moving spirit of the entire organizing of this occasion. I think it would be best that we have the opportunity to listen to the distinguished Minister for External Affairs who was until recently also our Finance Minister. I met him as a Finance Minister long time ago, in 1991, when he was also the Finance Minister at that time. But he is a very distinguished man, a great



public figure in our country and who, as the Minister for External Affairs, would be speaking to you first and foremost on "Forging a Constructive Relationship". I give you the distinguished Minister for External Affairs, Shri Yashwant Sinha.

Keynote Address by Mr Yashwant Sinha, Minister of External Affairs of India

Dr Singhvi, Distinguished Panellists, Distinguished Co-Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely happy to have this fraternity to deliver the Keynote Address at this First Plenary Session being organized as part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations.

The subject of this session, as you all know, is "India and the Diaspora – Forging a Constructive Relationship". I would like to begin with the comment that relations between India and its Diaspora have, over the last 55 years, been in a process of transformation and evolution. From the time of Independence, concerns of the Indian diaspora were foremost in the minds of our national leaders.

The issue of Indian migration abroad, citizenship for Indians overseas, relationship between overseas Indians and their host communities figured in the constituent assembly, as well as Parliament. Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of India's foreign policy, believed that overseas Indians should give primary consideration to the interests of people of countries to which they have migrated. They should not exploit the people of those countries. They must be friendly to the local people, cooperate with them, and help them. Nehru felt that this was not only a correct policy, but also a practical policy. He said, when any unfair treatment is given to our countrymen we should protest, but protest in a friendly way. India should protect the interests of Indians abroad. It should not, however, protect vested interests, which injure the cause of the country in which overseas Indians live. According to Pandit Nehru, India should do its best to protect all legitimate interests. India has to be, and should be, deeply interested in Indians being able to live their lives abroad with self-respect and dignity. Many of these principles formulated by Pandit Nehru continue to remain valid and relevant.

However, the world has changed since then. Today, there is a new India and a diaspora whose character is very different from what it was during the early years of Independence. Towards this, the issue of how we can forge a constructive relationship, we need to first understand what are the difficulties, which have hindered the development of such a relationship so far.

In my view, the following factors are relevant in this regard. Some of them have been referred to in the speeches, which have been made earlier.

1. Like India, a high-level of diversity characterizes the Indian Diaspora. The diversity of the diaspora has resulted in the emergence of different social groupings within the diaspora based on culture, language, religion and region, a fact which the Prime Minister referred to in his speech. This has perhaps prevented the establishment of a pan-Indian unity amongst the Indian diaspora.
2. Earlier, neither the numerical strength nor the economic resources of the diaspora was what it is today. Moreover, the licencepermitquota raj, which India practised till the end of the '80s, was based not only on a distrust of Indians in India, but also of the members of the diaspora. Likewise, the diaspora's approach towards India and the Indian Government also tended to be negative at times.
3. Our earlier attitude towards taking up concerns of Indian communities with governments of host countries was one of utmost caution. We feared that such advocacy might provoke a backlash upon the Indian community.
4. And finally, India had limitations in what it could do for its diaspora in far-flung

quarters of the world at a time when it had few instruments of power at its disposal.

This brings me to the question of how India can forge a constructive relationship with the diaspora. Treated in front of an audience as distinguished as this, I claim to have no conclusive views. What I intend to do is to engage in some thinking aloud to put forward the following perspective.

The material circumstances of India, as well as those of the Indian diaspora have substantially changed over the last 55 years. India is now a strong and powerful nation, which has emerged on the world stage. In fact, the pace and intensity of diplomatic activity that India is engaged in, is itself a good indicator of our status in the world. Today, during the last six months I have interacted with over 80 foreign ministers. The list of high-level visitors to India in 2002 fills over three pages and includes all-important nations of the world. For example, Zu Long Gee of China came in January 2002, Putin of Russia came in December 2002 and a large number of senior visitors came from US, EU and our extended neighbourhood. We are now awaiting the arrival of President Khatami of Iran.

Similarly, we have today built significant national strength in every sense of the term, a fact that the Prime Minister was referring to, but some of them were repetitions. We have averaged 6 percent growth rate over the last decade and are targeting 8 per cent in the next five years. Inflation has been at a record low. Our foreign exchange reserves are over 70 billion US dollars. From a food-shortage country, we have been an exporter and donor of food grains. Our software industry is the envy of the world. We are a nuclear power. We also possess significant conventional military capabilities and we have an advanced defence production industry. Our space, nuclear science, biotech and other high-tech capabilities are a matter of pride. Most of all, it is widely acknowledged that our human resources are amongst the best in the world.

The Indian diaspora is also more organized and influential than any time before. I would like to draw a distinction between the migration, which took place from India in the 18th century, which was a process based on compulsion with the migration post-Independence in the direction of western countries and the Gulf. In the former case, the attainment of freedom from the shackles of colonialism by a large number of countries and the dawn of democracy resulted in the Indian diaspora becoming a political force in their respective countries. The post-Independence diaspora in contrast comprised of highly-qualified professionals who, through their hard work and dedication rapidly ascended heights of economic prosperity. As a result, today the Indian diaspora can boast of political prowess, economic prosperity, and not to mention intellectual achievements of world calibre. I believe that these changed circumstances of the diaspora, as well as India provide the basis for a new and close partnership between us.

India has completely shed whatever ambivalence it might have had towards its diaspora. There is today a wide recognition of the important contribution the diaspora has made to India and the role it can play in the advancing of India's interests. The organization of this day itself is a clear demonstration of the shedding of that ambivalence. The same can also be said of the willingness of the Indian Government to address issues such as Dual Citizenship, institute awards for distinguished members of the diaspora and other issues.

Further support for a close partnership with the diaspora transcends political barriers. It is worthwhile to note that India's economic reforms in the '90s, as well as the remarkable role played by the Chinese diaspora in the economic transformation of China has contributed to changing the mindsets in India. Members of our diaspora have perhaps always contributed to humanitarian causes within India. But there is a greater realization



now that much more can be done. The diaspora is, at present, investing in the development of education and health in our country. It is investing in industries. It is bringing ideas and modern management practices from the rest of the world to India. Members of the diaspora are even adopting villages and changing the face of the land from which their ancestors came. India too recognizes the need to do much more both for its own citizens and for our friends who visit from abroad. We need to bring our major airports to world-class standards. We need to upgrade greater connectivity within the country, and customs and immigration procedures need to be improved. We need to upgrade a variety of services that affect the life of the common man.

The size of the diaspora, as well as its reach is steadily growing. Today, there is probably no part of the world where we cannot find at least a small Indian community. Simultaneously, the world is becoming increasingly multicultural and plural. While racism and xenophobia continue to pose problems in many parts of the world, there is also a large constituency of support for ethnic diversity. The growing popularity of Indian music, dance, cinema, cuisine, religion and philosophy in different parts of the world is a good example of this phenomenon. Within India too, the mourn of brain-drain has given way to the accolade of brain-gain.

One thing the Indian diaspora must do if it has to make a better impact on its host communities, as well as, in India is that it should get better organized. The enthusiasm of individual groups and organizations for maintaining their own leadership, distinctive traditions and practices is understandable. But there must also be systematic efforts to bring all organizations under one roof so that they can work together towards a common goal. Here, we must try and emulate the Jewish diaspora. This is a process, which must primarily emerge from within the country. I, therefore, appeal to all community leaders within the Indian diaspora to try and do their utmost to organize them under a single umbrella so that their collective voice can be effectively heard.

Even as the above tasks are undertaken, it is important that both India and members of the diaspora remain sensitive to the concerns of the host communities and their host governments. There should be no doubt or misunderstanding with regard to the nature and role of Indian communities in the countries they live in. As our Prime Minister has stated, there cannot be dual loyalties.

Finally, India is today an important player in the world community. There is significant influence you can bring to bear on issues and situations. However, we should be attuned to the complexities of international relations. It needs to be kept in mind that often quiet diplomacy, backdoor interventions and collective efforts on the part of a group of countries bring better results than a sledgehammer approach. Perhaps, the day of the war of Gentiles here may not return. The collective good of the silent majority should be always kept in mind. Pursuit of vested interests by individuals or groups should not lead to the safety and vital economic interests of entire communities being jeopardized.

The Indian diaspora is, in every sense of the term, a celebration of India. It is vibrant, motivated, hard working, highly talented and passionate about India. The diaspora has a vital role to play in taking the best of India to the world and bringing the best of the world back to India. India has always been known as a nation of exceptional individuals, a society, which has produced greats like Buddha, Ashoka, and Mahatma. Our shortcoming, though, has been our inability to forge individual talents into a collective endeavour. This inability is an immutable rule of principle. India displayed extraordinary unity during its national movement. It stood together as one nation and vanquished an empire on which the Sun would not set.

Each time India was threatened with war, the people of the nation joined hands and

rallied together in defence of the motherland. We together overcame the financial crisis of 1991 and the post - 1998 economic sanctions. India's software industry has won praise from the entire world, thanks to our collective efforts. India is rich because of its people. So it ever was, so it ever will be. But now we must move from individual excellence and collective failure to a greater India that is truly a great power. The challenge before India and the diaspora is the same. How do we knit together exceptional individual talents and forge them into a collective will that works for the benefit of the diaspora, that works for the benefit of the host communities in which the diaspora lives, that works for the benefit of India and, most important of all, works for world peace, stability and progress. I am confident that India and the Indian diaspora will accept this challenge and in the process forge a close and constructive partnership in the years to come.

Thank you for your attention.

Address by Sir Shridath Ramphal, Former Secretary General, Commonwealth Secretariat

Hon'ble Minister, Dr Singhvi who I remember of course so well as a colleague in London where he was a much-loved and much-respected High Commissioner. Some of you will have noticed that when the Prime Minister presented me with this magnificent award, we embraced each other and you may have wondered how that was. Well, it was because 30 years ago we were Foreign Ministers together labouring in that particular vineyard. And what a commentary that is on India and its diaspora. A Foreign Minister of India and a Foreign Minister from a diaspora, in a far-flung country like Guyana.

Now, the winds of history have scattered, very far and very wide, the seeds of the tree of India. The currents that carried them across the world have followed so very many varied courses that the resulting blooms are much unlike each other, save only in their common root. The Indian diaspora, we need to remember this right through this discussion over the next two days, is as multifaceted as India itself. The diaspora that derives from indentured labour two centuries ago is not the same as the diaspora, which derives from Indians who immigrated to the west after the Second World War.

My homeland is Guyana. My identity is Caribbean. India was a home of my ancestors and specially our great grandmother who, out of the wretchedness and of widowhood and poverty, crossed the "Kala Paani" from Calcutta to British Guyana 120 years ago, indentured to labour on a sugar plantation and there are curiosities in all these history. It was a sugar plantation once owned by an English merchant whose name was John Gladstone. And it was Gladstone's son William endowed by the sale of the Guyana plantations that were to become the Prime Minister of Britain. In fact, the whole system of indenture to the Caribbean as one historian described it another kind of slavery.

Actually, it began with a letter written by John Gladstone to the firm of Gillander's Arbuthnot Co on the 4th of January, 1938. And that was the firm with its headquarters in Calcutta. Now, still they're in New Delhi. My widowed ancestor had left India in rebellion for refusing to die on her husband's funeral pyre, which the law forbids. But the family's orthodoxy considered it a family disgrace. She left for Benaras to be cleansed of her wrong. Her faith was recruitment with promises of good life across the waters. She was recruited to Dutch plantations in Surinam with her young son of three. She served her indenture of five years and exercised her right to repatriation, convinced that she had perditioned her offence and would be welcomed back by her family. In fact, they swept the dust before her on the basis that she had now twice offended for an indenture she had lived among meat-eaters. Back to Benaras and this time lured by the assurance of the recruiters that the British planters were not as cruel as the Dutch, a proposition of doubtful validity and if a better life awaited her in British Guyana, she



went back to indenture. And I am the product three generations later of that double encounter with the indenture system. She did not live long in Guyana and her young son grew up in the care of the Canadian Presbyterian Missionaries. And his son, my father, became a teacher and a pioneer of education.

I was the first of my family, the very first, third generation of that great and brave grandmother to have actually visited India. And when I did so which was in 1972, it was as Foreign Minister of an independent Guyana.

I have told you this to make the point in personal terms. How our posteriors from India are all very different. And those differences are reinforced over the years as generations evolve in their own countries. As we gather in India this week, it is well to remember the advice that has been referred to already that Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime of India gave. That is, he said, people of Indian origin settled overseas should give their loyalty to the countries they have adopted. He said that in the Lok Sabha on the 2nd of September and again on the 17th of December as far back as 1957.

And this has been wise Indian Government's policy consistently over the years. I suggest to you that such loyalty is a concomitant of belonging to those new countries and it is an advice by which the Indian diaspora must always live, consistent however, with pride in Indian ancestral roots. And that the diaspora in such situations will honour India best by being honourable citizens of their new homes.

But what should be the ways? And this is, in many ways, a harder question by which India forges a constructive relationship with the diaspora. Not that follows from what I said. Not an activist's way. For that will contradict and confuse the role of the diaspora itself in its new orientation. The diaspora is not, in all respects, India abroad. Rather, that constructive relationship should, I think, be on a higher plain. A plain, which endows the Indian diaspora with renewed pride in India's achievements, achievements across the border in the economic, social and cultural spheres, in the civil and political world. The most constructive relationship should not be a functional, but an inspirational one, a relationship rooted in the areas of values, of principles, of examples, Values like tolerance and caring, Values like social inclusion and the breaking down of ancient barriers. Values which the Diaspora itself seeks the infused within the global neighbourhoods of which it has become a part.

As someone whose life has been spent largely in global affairs, India's ethical internationalism, for example, has always been for me as Tagore so lyrically wrote, the lantern which I carry in my hand makes enemy of the darkness of the farther road. India carried that lantern bravely. That India was the first country to sever diplomatic relations with apartheid South Africa which was a reinforcement of such relationships. That India fathered the non-alignment movement in the earliest days of the Cold War and still lives by those of its tenets that have transcended that area like a domestic and humanitarian global order that rejects imperialism under any guise. All that is leadership of which the Indian diaspora can always be proud and more than proud can be strengthened and encouraged.

The most constructive relationship with the diaspora that India can cultivate lies, I believe, in India being true to its highest traditions. If India retreats from those lofty ideals, so will the diaspora retreat from India. If India does not retreat, but more and more assumes its role, a part of the coterie of countries that had a conscience of the world, then it is example of those who shine in the darkness, that from time to time threatens humanity even as it does now. And the Indian diaspora will take heart from its ancestral links and will guard that relationship well. The Indian diaspora that yearns for that light will be encouraged and strengthened and will in turn fulfil its own highest ambitions to contribute to human betterment. Let me end with a translation of some of this into practicality in the story I have told here in India publicly before.

Forty years ago, as Guyana's first Foreign Minister, when asked how we should vote at the UN outside many complex areas in which our fledgling foreign service has no clear instructions in the national or a regional sense, I answered to our Foreign Service officers, "be guided by how India works." (Applause) That was not a response dictated by sentiment. A multiracial Guyana saw functional value in being guided by India's internationalism in those early days. It is not, therefore, an example of relationship with the diaspora. But it indicates, I think, what it means for India's inspirational role to be the basis of the most constructive relationship with the diaspora. The most enduring relationships with the Indian diaspora are those of ancestral pride sustained by present.

Thank you.

Address by Prof Lord Bhikhu Parekh, UK

Mr Yashwant Sinha, Dr Singhvi, Sir Shridath Ramphal, My Fellow Panellists and Distinguished Guests,

I would like to begin by thanking Dr Singhvi personally and also his colleagues and our Government of India for inviting me to associate myself with this extremely important three-day conference. I think this is a historical event with a potential to become a historic event.

This is really the first time since our Independence that the Government of India has invited a large number of representatives for the diaspora with a view to engaging in a systematic dialogue as to the nature of the relationship between the two. And I feel myself in a slightly strange situation because as Dr Singhvi said I happen to be both an Indian who can speak from within India and also a member of the diaspora. I left India when I was 24 in order to study in England and I thought I was now going to enter the diasporic stream. Then in 1981 I was invited by the Government in Gujarat to come back to India as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Baroda. I spent three years and went back to England and has spent my time there ever since. Although having spent three years here, I found myself coming to India almost twice a year in different capacities. So, I speak in a dual capacity, both as someone who is a friend, part of this society and who is also part of the diaspora. And it is in this context that I want to raise, Mr Chairman, certain important issues.

When we talk about the diaspora, I think, we need to bear one very important thing in mind. Indian historians and Indian citizens in general tend to think of India as a rather passive, inactive country to which people from all over the world came either to loot or to settle or to rule over us and then go back. Even Pandit Nehru in his *Discovery of India* thinks of India as a beautiful woman whom outsiders came to court and woo and perhaps to rape. I think this is a one-sided and somewhat misguided view of our history and the diaspora is a standing example of this. If outsiders have come to us, we have also gone out of the country to reach out to them. So, the rest of the world is our "Karma Bhoomi". We have acted on historical sites in other countries and transformed them. In other words, to me, India represents not a narrow brand of cultural nationalism. Rather, India represents a society which has received cultures from other countries, absorbed them, synthesized them and in return made its own great civilizational impact on the rest of the world. In other words, India is nothing if it is not Vishwa Bharati as Tagore and Gandhiji and others have talked about. Not cultural nationalism, but cultural universalism is really at the heart of our identity and I think what the diaspora does is constantly to remind India that a part of it lies outside. India will be untrue to its history, untrue to its destiny if it ever forgot that it was an inherently open and outgoing society.

Now, in this specific context of today's meeting where we are trying to explore what

kind of relationship India should establish with the diaspora, I have a number of ideas. But given the fact that I only have five or six minutes, I just quickly want to run through three or four important issues. I have written recently an 11-point programme, which, I think, the Government of India needs to follow and I gather the copies are available at the registration.

The first point I want to make is that India has woken up to the existence of the diaspora rather late. Later than almost any other country, be it China, or Israel or whatever. Therefore, it is very important that India should have a systematic policy on the diaspora. The Government of India alone cannot design this policy because policy relates to us in the diaspora. And therefore, there must be a systematic dialogue, an ongoing dialogue taking place in an institutionalized forum where this policy can be designed. The policy cannot be made once and for all because as historical context changes, policy will have to acquire a new dimension.

The first thing I would like to propose is that there should a forum within India where the representatives of the Government of India and representatives of the diaspora can regularly meet on a six-monthly or preferably a yearly basis to explore if there is a common interest. Conferences of this kind are fine, but they can't be sustained and should not be sustained every year. Maybe once, every three or four years. But on a regular basis a kind of a dialogue is necessary.

I think in this context a very profound statement was made by our Foreign Minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha. When he said that the diaspora is settled in different parts of the world. We bring with us certain sensibilities. And if India is going to reassess its place in the world at large, it would need to know what the world at large thinks about itself, as well as about India. And we, whether we are in the United Kingdom or United States or wherever, can bring regularly to the Government of India our insight into how the world is changing and how India needs to change with it. We can be a remarkable pool of ideas, attitudes, information, knowledge and sensibilities. And the kind of forum that I am proposing would be a useful institutional space where that kind of dialogue can take place.

So, I think, any kind of relationship between India and its diaspora cannot be based on abstract goodwill and love and patriotism alone. Patriotism is in short supply even in India and to expect that the diaspora is bursting with love of India and dying to make any sacrifices is to live in a world of illusions. We do have commitment to India. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here. But at the same time we have our own legitimate interests. And, therefore, it is extremely important that India's constructive relations with the diaspora should be based on a hard and realistic assessment of the legitimate interests of both parties. Because I have seen from my knowledge of other societies and their diasporas that if there is a mismatch of expectations between the country and its diaspora, the relations can easily go sour and it can only spell disaster.

India needs to ask itself why it is interested in the diaspora. Investment is not enough. Political clout and promotion of India's cause abroad is not enough. What are the other legitimate long-term interests that India has in the diaspora and conversely why should the diaspora be interested in India. I can think of half a dozen good reasons. But I think it is extremely important that both sides should be absolutely clear as to what it is they are entitled to expect.

I have seen that in our deliberations today the second and third generations have been almost entirely ignored. The diaspora is hardly going to last for more than 15 or 20 years. By this time, many of us will be in our graves. It is, therefore, extremely important that the Government of India should be thinking seriously of engaging the interest and sympathy of the young Indians who are growing up abroad.

And this requires a kind of comprehensive cultural programme that Israel designed in 1949, China designed about four years ago involving things like cultural tours, summer schools, exchange of students, exchange of staff and so on and on. In other words, unless we can retain the loyalty of the future generation, any dialogue would be meaningless.

Long-distance nationalism is always dangerous. The politics of Israel has been gravely distorted by the politics of the Jewish diaspora, especially in the United States. We in India suffered at the hands of the overseas support for Khalistan. It is, therefore, extremely important that while the Government of India should evoke and mobilize the patriotism of the diaspora, it must also remember that the diaspora has its own agenda, has its own legitimate concern. And therefore on both sides the long-distance patriotism must be handled with great care and sensitivity.

And finally if we are going to rethink the relation between India and diaspora, then we also need to rethink the role of diplomatic missions. Our embassies abroad are traditionally persuaded to think of themselves as representing one government to another. When diaspora begins to play a significant part in the Indian politics and conversely India begins to play a significant part in diasporic politics, then the role of diplomatic missions must change. They must become a conduit between the people of India or the Government of India and the diaspora. And they, in turn, need to have some kind of advisory councils where the diaspora settled in that particular country can advise the diplomatic missions on how to handle affairs.

In this context, I want to pay a particular tribute to Dr Singhvi, and also to his predecessor. When he came to England, he said here is a society to which I am required to represent my country, but I don't understand the inner dynamics of this country. I don't regularly meet opinion-makers, journalists, academics and I cannot meet them too openly because I would immediately be seen as advocating the cause of India. And he very wisely invited six or eight of us to meet him regularly on a bimonthly basis to talk about our perception of what was happening in England and what the Government of India should be doing. I think the diaspora can be a source of invaluable advice and input in diplomatic missions.

I think I have said almost everything that I wanted to say in five minutes, but this one thought because we academics can't end our talks without a slightly mysterious note. And I think Dr Singhvi suggested that 9th of January should be the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. Since the Government of India has accepted it and we are told that the explanation is that this was the day when Gandhiji returned from South Africa. But remember he returned for good. Is it your suggestion, Dr Singhvi? And he is one of the subtlest and finest diplomatic minds that I have met in my long experience. So, the suggestion of 9th January cannot be entirely innocent. Is it your suggestion that we in the diaspora should emulate the example of the greatest Indian of our generation, Mahatma Gandhi, and return to India for good? If that's your intention, then I don't think it will be in the interest of either of us.

Address by H E Dato' Seri S Samy Vellu, Minister of Works, Malaysia

His Excellency Yashwant Sinha, External Affairs Minister of India, Dr L M Singhvi, Chairman, Organizing Committee, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and Chairman of the High-level Committee of Indian diaspora, Co-Chairman, Hon'ble Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider this a great privilege and honour to address this plenary session on India and

the Diaspora – Forging a Constructive Relationship. I must, at the very outset, congratulate the Prime Minister and the Government of India for this timely and visionary recognition of the tremendous potentials and contributions made by the diasporic communities around the globe. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is, indeed, a historical gathering and truly a meeting of minds and hearts. Furthermore, we are laying the foundation for effective networking, partnerships and collaborative actions. The study undertaken by the high-level committee on the Indian Diaspora and the subsequent report released by them clearly establishes the issues and concerns on the one hand and the potentials and opportunities on the other. The Indian diasporic communities, which comprise about 20 million people and are scattered in 110 countries, have a rich history, heritage and capacity to play a strategic role at the global level.

Over the past 100 years, the Indian diaspora has entrenched itself in other lands. While adapting to the new environment and becoming relevant to that context, it has at the same time preserved their language and culture. These communities have responded positively to the multicultural challenges and found new resilience in the ability to coexist in a pluralistic and diverse racial religious, cultural and linguistic environment. It has developed the art of adaptation and innovation through strategic negotiations in everyday life. In many parts of the world, the Indian diaspora has excelled in education and professional capacities, economic and business ventures, political and civil society activities. In so doing, it has contributed greatly to the nation building in their respective lands where they participate as active and responsible citizens. These innate abilities to survive and excel provide opportunities in this age of globalization and economic liberalization.

We now live in a new global village where technology has revolutionized life and communication. We have developed the tools of global connectivity. The new borderless economy provides opportunities to establish transnational networks of production, trade and finance. In recognizing the access the Indian diaspora can facilitate around the world, we can strategically build effective networks and partnerships within us for global advantages. At the global level, today we also face unprecedented challenges such as international terrorism, global poverty and inequality in the distribution of resources and the widening digital divide. Over 800 million people in Asia alone live on less than one dollar per day. The Indian diaspora can forge collaborative action in addressing the needs of the humanity.

There is a large pool of talent to share with the world. Fostering partnership between India and the Indian diaspora is a two-way process. The key dimension is how can there be a win-win situation for multiple players. India has made remarkable economic progress over the past two decades. The economic forecast for 2003 is very encouraging. A 6-percent projected growth is a fertile ground for attracting direct foreign investment. The Indian diaspora could play an important role in mobilizing savings and investments. Furthermore, the economic growth in India provides numerous business opportunities for the foreign Indian diaspora companies.

Malaysians had been successful in investing and participating in infrastructure projects in India. We could further facilitate these through collaboration partnerships, which will be beneficial for both India and Malaysia. Technology transfer in the fields of software development, pharmaceutical research and development, and healthcare services through business ventures outside India are other possibilities that could be explored in partnership with the Indian diaspora.

In the field of higher education, India with its vast expertise can enable the diaspora to reach greater heights of intellectualism. This could be done through increasing opportunities for higher education in India. This is our greatest contribution to humanity to nurture

innovation and creativity. These are the two skills necessary for success in the knowledge-based economy and these will secure a cutting edge in the modern times.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, it is my hope and prayer that we can, during this conference, grapple with the critical issues of people mobilization for global action through economic growth and equitable distribution strategies to ensure that humanity has a place under the sun. There are no answers or quick remedies. However, if we commit ourselves to global partnership for transformation, then we have some hope for humanity as a whole.

Thank you.

Address by Mr Mewa Ramgobin, Member of Parliament in South Africa

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, My High Commissioner, and Friends,

You must forgive me, I am going to take two minutes more. I dedicate this presentation to all those in South Africa, in the South African the diaspora who gave up their lives, who were caught in the trenches and sacrificed their own comforts to make possible a non-racial, democratic, non-sexist and united South Africa. And to those men and women, the scientists, the lawyers, social workers, businesspersons, sportspersons, religious leaders, educationists and trade unionists who have continued to transform an apartheid society, country into a democratic one.

This, ladies and gentlemen, has given us in South Africa a uniqueness. A uniqueness, which, in my humble view, is unprecedented in the diasporian activities anywhere in the world. And I believe this uniqueness is a humble tribute consciously or unconsciously to Swami Vivekananda's conviction that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others. And where such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy of holiness, the results have always been disastrous.

To inaugurate the celebrations of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to coincide with Gandhiji's return to India is of special interest for all democracy-loving, justice-seeking and secularists in my country. Indeed, South Africa was the crucible and racism an evil where the Father of the Nation forged his weapon of Satyagraha. In most ways, I say this humbly, the Gandhian Trinity of Ahimsa, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya is a gift from my country South Africa to the entire world. It is not only co-essential to Africa's "*ubuntu*" - I am because you are-, but I am compellingly convinced that the Father of the Indian Nation could not have been insensitive, sensitive as he was, to this moral course in my country.

The synergies of the past decades, ladies and gentlemen, between India and South Africa in the field of political freedom, in my view, are historically unrivalled. But what is of greater significance is a role played by a major part of the Indian diaspora in South Africa in the politics of liberation notwithstanding the difficulties and shortcomings. It is a proud record of human conduct, especially in the last fifty years that the vast majority of the Indian diaspora refused to accept a racially discriminatory political dispensation, which was not made available to the indigenous African population. Of course, given the nature of colonial and apartheid rule, the South African Indian diaspora did, and continues to, enjoy certain economic privileges, but since 1946 we as part of the liberation movement rejected all political minority rights and struggled with all oppressed people, especially the African compatriots, for human rights.

Indeed, I am, in physical terms, the grandchild of Bihar from the district of Buxar and the village of Banni, which I visited some months ago. But with some 15 per cent of all

parliamentarians in my country, I sit in the highest political institution in South Africa. When the Indian diaspora in South Africa constitutes no more than 2 per cent of the population, it has 15 per cent of all parliamentarians in my country. This is because most of us lived and will hopefully continue to do so as South Africans who have made positive contribution towards the creation of a non-racial, democratic and united South Africa which we term as "One Nation, Many Cultures".

My expectations from India with all humility and due respect are simple, yet fundamental. While I do not ignore the state of the world, I cannot for any reason ignore what is rooted in your wisdom and I do not hesitate to pronounce "Vasudev Kutumbakam" - the world is a family. I do not hesitate to pronounce "ubuntu" - I am because you are. And I will never hesitate to pronounce the gifts that we gave to the world from South Africa the Gandhian Trinity of Ahimsa, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya. But I want to warn before you get too ambitious that this is a cogent part of my country's heritage coupled with it being a cogent part of your country's heritage in India. Perhaps, you might have another kind of civilization soon.

I am saying this because this is best illustrated in my country's secular Constitution, which pronounces as a supreme law that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, not only the African majority and not only the Indian minority and not only the White minority. It belongs to all who live in it. The Indian diasporian, especially those of us whose forefathers under very trying and difficult circumstances, Mr Chairperson, settled in what is termed as the developing world will need to constantly reflect on what is our role in these countries.

With special reference to South Africa, this conference has an obligation to engage its diaspora to find out whether we as a group, so-called, are indeed making South Africa livable for all who live in it. Are we helping to push back the frontiers of poverty, disease and homelessness. Are we an integral part of the African Renaissance? Whether special dispensations by India to the people of Indian origin in South Africa lead to political integration with cultural diversity.

Whether in the tradition of our liberation movement and in the post-1994 period, the South African-Indian diaspora's contribution in the fields of science, economics, the labour movement, in short, the reconstruction of our country will be augmented by this country and I pray to God that it will be and it should be. It is because, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Chairperson and my colleague diasporians, I draw a deep distinction between the Silicon Valley graduates and those of us who have graduated from indentured labour that I ask these questions for this conference to be seized with. For the indentured labour graduate, South Africa is his/her only home and in spite of the many problems facing us we cannot sit on the fence. We are either part or instruments of the solutions of these problems or by our moral lassitude become part of the problems.

Racism in South Africa was declared a crime against humanity, and India was in the forefront of this campaign. We salute you for this. Over and above the question of racial economic exploitation, racism has another dimension. Whether this racism comes from the feelings of racial superiority or pure prejudice in South Africa, it will be for the acquiring of security. The cost of a value system is based on social justice. It is not socially just for any society to be silent if not indifferent, least of all a diasporian. It is not enough. When unbridled capitalism and racial exploitation stalks our planet, when globalization is allowed to run rampant, when religious bigotry - whether of the Christian class or the Hindu group or the Islamic group - becomes the order of the day, when terrorism becomes an accepted way to resolve conflicts and racism is allowed to wear sophisticated garbs, my appeal to all, and I say this with respect, my appeal to all, not the least the Indian diaspora with the added voice of India is that there can never be security for any, even if it is going to be fertilized by and with the insecurity of others.

Given the nature of our struggles for democracy in South Africa, the installation of a democratic state in what you in the outside world describe as a miracle, the Indian diaspora in South Africa is indeed in a curious mood and I am not going to run away from it.

Without any lapses or romanticism and even less into cynicism, I pray and hope that India will lend herself to a productive and sustained consolidation of the view that communities, nations, like individuals, do and can wield indelible and lasting influence in human affairs by our commitment and devotion to ideas and values that are greater than our self-interests. A purpose, in historical terms, must be larger than the immediate sectarian advantage of any group or economic tendency.

Since 1947 when your free and secular nation was born and Mahatma Gandhi was declared by you as the father of it, India played and plays a distinguished role in the non-aligned movement in the South-South relationships in the hope that under the leadership of the people like Jawaharlal Nehru and others these regions will give the young of the world that together they would be able to make a better life for all.

In conclusion, Mr Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, these are the two minutes I had asked for additional. When you from India and the representatives of a diaspora from the 110 countries, present here and not present here, look at us in Africa, what is it that you see. You must see that we are hard at work redefining ourselves and in this redefinition you must see our dogged perseverance to change a continent of suffering, a theatre of wars, hunger, disease and ignorance and what many, in relative terms, call a kind of backwardness. Being victims of slavery, colonialism, racism and apartheid in South Africa, we fought and we struggled. We have, in most ways, succeeded in installing democracy and peace relatively. For the democracy and peace to be sustainable, we require development directed for the prosperity of all.

Ladies and gentlemen, a special appeal to the Indian diasporian. In the context of the strategic partnership between India and South Africa, I would implore that the networking visualized by this conference in the various fields must not detract from our efforts in reconstructing South Africa. Not only South Africa, it has to be in tandem with a growth and development in the Southern region, the African continent and ultimately the whole of the South.

The Indian diaspora, my ancestors' relatives, are searching for a description. My ancestors' relatives have to unite in action to defeat underdevelopment, to fight poverty, to pursue our efforts towards national reconciliation and transformation with a deeper sense of purpose and determination in visible ways. These must not remain platitudes. It has to make available both its human and material resources to bring down the walls of racism, whether this racism comes from the White people, African people or Indian people. Religious bigotry exists in India and in many countries where we have become the diaspora.

Casteism still prevails in India and it also prevails in many countries where the diaspora resides and xenophobia. It has to be actively involved in our struggles against terrorism, crime, corruption and nepotism. This exists in India, this exists in the countries of adoption by the diaspora. Mr Chairperson, I do not want to upset any apple carts. I pray to God with humility and reverence to the value systems that you have given the world. The diaspora has to be an active participant in the processes and programmes that revere life and therefore acting together as Africans for us in Africa, in my continent on the basis of my country or country-specific needs, we will not only give meaning to Gandhiji's Ahimsa, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya, but will also give a greater impetus to us to evaluate the significance of the 9th of January when he returned to these shores after earning the mantle of being the most renowned Indian diasporian of all times coming from my shores.



And I would like to make my last plea that in view of the fact that conferences of this nature are going to take place annually. Perhaps, it would be a good time to evaluate what we in South Africa call "have a performance audit" on the efforts of the Indian diasporian throughout the world. They have involved themselves and how they have involved themselves in pushing back the frontiers of poverty, in bringing down the walls of racism and bringing the walls down of religious bigotry.

Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, Former Prime Minister, Fiji

Hon'ble Yashwant Sinha, Minister for External Affairs, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much. It is my privilege to be sharing this historic occasion with you all, this afternoon. This assembly of the diaspora is undoubtedly the first of its kind to be held anywhere. It is a unique assemblage of the people of Indian origin from across the globe.

The occasion reminds me of the words of India's esteemed leader and the first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who, in his book, *Discovery of India*, ponders on the heritage that is India, and I quote: "Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness which had held all of us together for ages passed whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us. The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception for me, it was an emotional experience, which overpowered me. That essential unity had been so powerful that no political division, no disaster or catastrophe had been successful in breaking it. This had occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilization. That unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside. It was something deeper and within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practised and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged." Nehruji was talking of geographical India within the boundaries of the subcontinent as we know it. But I believe that the same sentiments hold true of the entire diaspora much beyond the boundaries of India.

We in the diaspora, ladies and gentlemen, are linked to our ancestral land through deep bonds of emotion, rituality and culture. We may have grown up in different environments, experienced different political faiths. Some of us even faced gross misfortune, but in the final analysis we are all bound together by a common code of Indian tradition. That wonderful heritage that traces back from 7,000 years to what we now know as the Saraswati Civilization. And it seems as if it is this sense of oneness that has brought so many of us together from the different corners of the earth to discuss issues that affect or interest us with a view to forge relationships which we would like to be bold, constructive and mutually beneficial.

The theme of this session is "India and the Diaspora – Forging a Constructive Relationship". May I say that relationships are easily established where there is affinity. Now, our kinship with India provides us an abundance of opportunities for forging constructive links in whatever field we choose, be it science, technology, commerce, medicine, education, religion, the media, fashion, the art, or even politics. The people of Indian origin have excelled in all these fields and many are often regarded as leaders in their own areas of expertise. There is one principle however that must govern all interaction between India and its diaspora and that it must be symbiotic contributing to the mutual welfare of both the people. It must be free of exploitation of any kind for personal or group gain. And, may I venture to suggest that a lasting bond between us can only be forged on this basis.

For us in Fiji, India has long been an inspiration. Our own initial agitation for political rights gained much of its momentum from the Indian struggle for independence from the British rule. Today, we are kept in touch with our language, our religion and other aspects of our culture because of the farsightedness of our forefathers who were wise enough to establish educational, cultural and religious institutions for the advancement of their children. In this regard, one must acknowledge also the very significant role played by the Indian film industry in keeping the diaspora tuned to the fads and fashions of the Indian lifestyle.

Having said as much, I wish to underscore the point that despite this common code that binds us together the Indian diaspora is by no means homogenous. We who come from outside India have been raised and nurtured in highly diverse environments. Our experiences have been widely divergent. Hence, our needs are naturally very different. Given this diversity within the diaspora, it stands to reason therefore that we seek different things in our interaction with India and with each other. Let me explain my point. There is a significant distinction in the diaspora between those who left India as emigrants to seek greener pastures and others who were taken often by force as indentured labour to the British colonies.

The immigrant community by and large went to affluent western societies and enjoys equal citizenship rights and freedoms. As such, they may seek little from India apart from greater trade or, at a personal level, cultural, family and spiritual links dictated by the demands of their lifestyles. On the other hand, the labourers or the coolie community such as those in South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, Surinam, Guyana, Trinidad and Fiji lived under conditions of extreme adversity. Their descendants come from communities where the rights were, or have been, under assault in one form or another for decades. Given these two very different scenarios, my fear is that we must guard against this conference coming in danger of focussing too much on how India and those in the affluent sectors of the diaspora can benefit from forging relationships with each other with little concern expressed for the needs of those members of the diaspora who are suffering and whose rights are under assault. That will indeed be a pity.

Many in the diaspora belong to societies that are repressed in one way or another and need special assistance and moral support in their struggle for justice. Fiji is definitely a case in point. We are a community that has suffered immensely as a result of three racially-motivated military coups executed against democratically-elected governments in the last 15 years. We are landless and defenceless; deprived of our constitutional rights; we are discriminated against in the basic areas of living and denied security and police protection in a seriously declining situation of law and order. Our common people descendants of indentured labourers, who have done no injustice to the indigenous community, are today crying out for justice. They need help, and I would be very happy to go back home from this conference with some tangible offers of help and hope.

As I had said at the beginning, relationships have to be mutually beneficial. Collectively, we have enormous economic and diplomatic leverage that can be effectively used to defend the rights of the people of Indian origin anywhere in the world, not only in Fiji. Not all of us face the same problems. Not all of us face persecution, discrimination, or a denial of civil and political rights. Our people in the western democracies do not face such problems and may not be fully aware of the plight of those who do. There is, thus, an overwhelming need to create a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of this fact amongst the diaspora. We need to show concern about each other and be aware of what is happening to the people of Indian origin around the globe.

The first duty, in my view, of the diaspora must be to stand up for and assist those of us



who are repressed. I regret to say this but as a people we are often seen to be too materialistic and single-minded in our approach to life. Most of us tend to be too obsessed with the pursuit of wealth and material benefits to worry about such things as equity, justice or human rights. Let us remind ourselves, ladies and gentlemen, that this conference this week in no small measure pays homage to Mahatma Gandhi for his courageous fight against racial discrimination in South Africa. Gandhiji's very active interest in Indians in South Africa and subsequently in the plight of Indians in Fiji is a clear message that India cannot abandon PIOs to their own fate.

India has responsibility, indeed a moral obligation, to look after the legitimate interests of Pravasi Bharatiyas, no matter where they may be. I believe this duty becomes even more abiding where the most basic of rights and interests of the PIO community are under assault. We who come from the poorer sectors of the diaspora are also looking to our more affluent societies for tangible assistance in the way of education and training opportunities for the children of our poor. Perhaps, this conference may wish to consider the ways and means through which such assistance can be provided effectively to those in need. This meeting may also want to consider setting up a suitable mechanism to monitor, mobilize public support and organize effective programme to deal with the pressing situations in the diaspora.

All we seek, ladies and gentlemen, as PIOs is to secure our future generations in our own countries to which our loyalty and allegiance lies. This can only happen if we can live in dignity enjoying equal opportunities and on equal terms with the rest of the society. Let me conclude my address by paying homage to India in the words of that great American historian, Will Durant, who acknowledged India thus, and I quote: "India was the Motherland of our race and Sanskrit the Mother of Europe's languages. India was the mother of our philosophy, of much of our mathematics, of our ideals embodied, in Christianity, of self-government and democracy. In many ways, Mother India is the mother of us all" and I only wish as I leave this forum that both India and the diaspora can achieve the kind of harmony and synchronization that we saw this morning in the rendition by the great Ustad Bismillah Ali Khan and the revered Pandit Ravi Shankar. I thank you for your patience.

Address by Mr Ernest Moutoussamy, Member of Parliament, Guadeloupe

Your Excellencies, Minister of External Affairs,

At this time, I go back to the millions of Indians who 150 years ago left for Guadeloupe and Martini to all colonies of France in the Caribbean. They went there for five years in order to restart sugar cane cultivation after the abolition of slavery in 1848. However, for almost all of them that was the last time they were to see their country because they never came back. I would like to pay homage to their memory and would also like to congratulate the authorities in India for having organized this august assembly and bringing us together.

We are the descendants of these ancestors who made India known to the world. It took me fifteen hours by air to come to the motherland, whereas they took ninety to a hundred days to travel by boat to their host countries. This was a voyage marked by suffering but also dreaded new friendships. However, after America, Europe and Africa, India brought in its oriental colours to the great Caribbean basin. Uprooted from its native land, the Indian became a surf of the glib under the Caribbean sun and was reduced to just one duty and that was to serve in the sugar cane fields.

They were condemned to be born, to live and to die for this reed, changing masters

at the same time as cattle and farm equipment changed hands. Ostracized, confronted hostility by the West Indian society, their horizons were bound only by the orders given by the sugar cane estate. They were condemned to anonymity. They remained silent and faced indifference. They fought obstinately not to be dispossessed of their identity and of their Gods. In the sugar cane fields which became their cradle and their tombs with no temple, without festivals, without any schools, with suicide offering the only way out, they managed to gain the title of Guadeloupeans after leaving 20,000 dead for just 51,000 tonnes of sugar within this phase of 30 years. Thanks to the struggle led by R V Chidambaram, one of his sons, the Indians finally stepped into the world of men and continued to offer Guadeloupe their culture, their humanism and their labour force while at the same time investing themselves in the destiny of this country.

They are, today, legitimate and acknowledged children of this country. Although the Indians were often used against their African brothers, the latter apart from just a few jibes did not bear them any grudges. In any case, Negroes, Whites and Indians rather than living in clans all came together in the melting pots that was Guadeloupe while at the same time retaining their specificities to produce beautiful bouquets which are now flowering and offering its colours to the world fraternity. Today, the Indian presence in the West Indian French departments can be seen basically through the worship according to Hindu rites, the celebration of deities such as Mariaman, Kali and Madhuriveran in Tamil. The contribution of the Indian cuisine to the cuisine of the region is well known because the typical Indian masalas are used in the food prepared everyday by these people. The celebration of various events like Simblani, which is a homage to those who have died, the marka ceremony and so on and traditional dances evoking the great epics still continue. Moreover, the people of Indian origin stand out because of their impact on agriculture, cattle raising, their performance in the merchant economy, transport, public works, commerce and by their participation in the social life of the country.

Finally, the Caribbean basin where we live which is truly an American Mediterranean, is the geographical basis of the twenty-five states of the association of Caribbean states and certainly constitutes the greatest crossroads for the mixing of races in the entire planet and it is also the most beautiful cradle of interbreeding in the world itself. In this region, which is a precursor to the future, mixing of humanity, there is a dynamic culture because it is a plural culture and it can be considered as a favoured space for values such as tolerance, liberty, respect of one another and hospitality. It is very important for the people of Indian origin in this country to have a consulate of India or to have some person accredited by the Government of India in order to promote contacts and exchanges.

Furthermore, would it be possible to envisage a large conference to be held in 2004 to celebrate the presence of India in the Caribbean region during the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian in Guadeloupe.

Thank you for your attention. Long live India and long live the Indian diaspora.

Thank you.

Address by Mr B K Agnihotri, India's Ambassador- at-Large

Hon'ble Minister Yashwant Sinha, Dr Singhvi and other Distinguished People on the platform,

I am so overwhelmed, I don't think I need to talk too much because this is a sort of a



dream come true. For the last fourteen months, it is by appointment as an Ambassador I have been running around the world talking about many things including that what steps we should take to become one world Indian family. This is the day or the start of that beginning of the "world family" concept. Thanks to you all that you have come here.

We have a wonderful set of speakers here to talk about issues. The only thing I would say at this time is this that we should consider this day to be the beginning of the new generation of journey to collective action for India and for the diaspora. I just heard earlier that if there is a pain somewhere in Fiji, there should be pain in America too. We should have one global feeling that wherever Indians live they belong to one family. They belong to one system. We don't have to look to India all the time. In America for example, Indian-Americans get up and talk to everybody they can if there is some problem in Guyana or Surinam or Trinidad. So, we have to be working together and that is the theme of networking working together.

We have a wonderful set of speakers. I want to give all my time to them.

Thank you very much.

Mr Ujjal Dosanjh, Former Premier of British Columbia, Canada

Thank you, distinguished guests at the platform, all of you distinguished people out there. It is wonderful to be here. I want to say to you how proud I am as an Indian and as a Canadian to be here on this day that is being celebrated for the first time. I am an Indian, still the same young child that left this great land with its dust in my nostrils still ticking away with its beauty in my mind's eye always. I have come back today to share a couple of words. What can one say in the distinguished company of people like Mr Sen the Nobel Laureate. Yet, I will try and make basically two points.

We who are living in distant lands always think that India is our ancestral and spiritual home. We come back here even though we may not have the relatives. Yet, India and Indians are our family. That is why we come here almost every year, every other year. When we see India develop and India grow our hearts soar, we feel proud. In Canada, in the land of the Komagatamaru, in the land of our ancestors who came to India from Canada to fight for the independence of the country, in that land in 1948 we fought for the first time in over 40 years gained the right to vote. And as a result of that people like me because of the fact that India was now independent, because of the fact that we had made great strides of progress in that country people like me, a little child from the villages of Punjab, not having gone to an English school could become the Premier of British Columbia. It is a tribute to India, it is a tribute to Indians and it is also a tribute to the whole society of which I am a part. A society that is multicultural, like India is multicultural. India is multilingual, multiethnic, multiracial. So is Canada and we take pride as Canadians in our multiculturalism and we take pride as Indians in our diversity which is very, very important and we should celebrate that diversity everyday in this great country because this is a country where Parsis came when they were persecuted we adopted them. We have adopted people from all over the world into this land and now many of us from this land have been adopted into other lands. It is a great family whether it is a diaspora or Indians living in India. No matter where you are you are, Indian. One more thing and then I will take off.

I make this point when I was a young child growing up in this great country going to school, sitting on a mat, learning the language, learning arithmetic, learning Hindi, learning Punjabi. "*Hindi bhi sikhte the, Punjabi bhi sikhte the, English ke kuch lafs bhi*

sikhte, bada mazaa a tha tha. Lekin hum dekhte the humare leader giants jaise hai. Nehru jaise Gandhi jaise jo nahin the humare saath humari bachpan mein. Lekin hum sochthe the ke Hindustan ka naam sari duniya mein chhaya huwa tha. Hum bacche the humey bada maan mahsoos hota tha. Hum chahtey hain, hum Canadian hain, hum Hindustani hain. Hum chahtey hain Hindustan ka naam Hindustan ki foreign policy, Hindustan ki international presence utni hi ho ab jitni Nehru ke waqt hua karti thi."

We have distinguished people like the Prime Minister of a country; we have other people in this great land. We need to make sure that we as Indians are able to leave our imprint on the international issues of the day, be it the non-aligned movement, be it the Commonwealth, be it the UN, be it the great issues of peace and disarmament, be it the great issues of equality, injustice and unfairness across the world. India can be a beacon of hope for the rest of the world. We are the land of the Buddha, we are the land of Gandhi, we are the land of Nanak and we are the land of the great leaders that we had in this great country.

So, I want to say to you I feel proud as an Indian, I feel proud as a Canadian. Let me not say another word other than saying I beg your forgiveness because I have another commitment for which I am already late. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Thank you.

Address by Prof Amartya Sen

Friends, I feel very privileged to be here. It is a wonderful occasion when the diaspora of India from all over the world can get together and interact with each other exchanging our ideas and our concerns in India itself and make us also happy that so many of my friends are here. They happen to be all students of mine. There are many other friends here and I am delighted to have the opportunity of speaking to you today.

I think there is no question in our mind that we are proud of being Indians. We are Indians in different ways, some of us like myself remain exclusively Indian citizen. Others may have a different citizenship, but still have the sense of belonging to India and being Indian. And there is a kind of variety in that which is also part of the variety, part of the diversity about which I think the former Prime Minister Ujjal Dosanjh spoke and even he mentioned the need to celebrate the diversity that we happen to have.

I think it is very important at this time when they asked the question we are proud of being Indian, what are we proud of, what is it that makes us proud of India. I think we can give it many different answers: It is a country with very diverse achievements, enormously rich history and we can choose different paths of tradition or heritage to anchor our pride in.

I would particularly emphasize the tradition, the culture and the civilization of openness for which India, I think, can be legitimately proud and I want to see that openness in different perspectives. I would like to distinguish between internal openness what I would call intuitiveness. I would like to emphasize a dialogic openness that when they disagree we are willing to have a dialogue on it and discuss and they often do disagree and that is the nature of the human mind. And I would also like to emphasize our interactive openness. This, they are trying to cultivate on its own. But we see ourselves as a part of the world with which we ought to have good reason to interrelate and interact. Now, I will concentrate primarily on the last 15 minutes that I have been given to speak. But I will

make a brief mention of the first two also, as far as the internal openness or intuitiveness is concerned. I think it is a point which was already mentioned by the previous speakers including the former Premier from Canada, as well as the former Prime Minister from Fiji, that we have to think of celebrating being Indian not as being one part of it, which is in some ways exclusive from the rest. So, you don't celebrate being Hindus, or Muslims, or Christians, or Sikhs, or Jains, or Parsis. Our tradition is one of seeing ourselves as Indians and that, of course, does not mean that we don't have different religious views, we don't have different literary taste, we have many languages, we have many cultures, we have many traditions of music, there are many traditions of dancing, there are enormous varieties. But despite those varieties, the importance of having an inquisitive Indian identity is, I think, dramatically important especially at this time.

I would like to emphasize also the issue of dialogic openness. That is the second kind of openness I am referring to. That is when they disagree. It is possible to have discussion on that. I think it is not recognized for how long a tradition is in India. I think, I am writing, claiming that the first international conferences to settle differences were the three Buddhist conferences that occurred, first of them shortly after the death of Gautama Buddha himself. Among the major followers they had, the first Buddhist Congress was held in Bihar to discuss how the different points of view that had emerged among the followers could be resolved. And the second and the third congresses took place over the following 100 years. Now, there is a tradition here of settling disputes by discussion which I think if at sometime the history of Indian democracy is written, I hope it will find a place in that because it is a tradition not just something that we got from the Magna Carta and the British Empire and the democratic tradition of the governing country, namely, Britain of India. But also something for which there is an earlier ancestry in the form not so much of election. As far as the elections are concerned, even though there are some examples of that in ancient India, by and large it is to the Greek that we owe the examples of that. But in terms of the dialogic openness, the fact that dispute could be resolved by discussion rather than by resorting to violence is something on which there is a long tradition in India which we ought to celebrate, want to adhere to, want to fight for and want to defend in every way that we can.

The third issue that I want to mention is the openness connected with the interactive world. And this is again a point of some importance to me because I sometimes sense that when people take a pride in India there is a tendency to see India as a kind of a confined, rather static, isolated civilization rather than a dynamic interactive one in the world which India had already been. And this is important to emphasize. In fact, ever since I spent about a dozen years doing Sanskrit and still like pursuing that today, I can't help quoting from an example those figures again and again in the Sanskrit literature. This is an edifice, the parable of what in Sanskrit is called "Kupamanduka." Kupa is a Well, manduka is a frog. It is the story of the Well Frog that figures in a large number of Sanskrit documents. I know of four "Ganapat" "Hitopadesh" "Prasannaraghava" "Bhakthikavya", all four of them. The story comes again. This is the story of a Frog which lives in a well, has never been outside. As you would imagine, it is not easy for a frog to leave the well and all it had seen is the inside of the well, an inside the world view. The world view is confined to the inside of the well. He is very suspicious of anything from outside.

Now, clearly the authors of Ganapat, Hitopadesh, Prasannaraghava, Bhakthikavya were very concerned with the fact that our desire to seclude ourselves may be so strong that we may end up in the illusory situation of being a well-frog which we should deeply try to avoid. This is an extremely important point to make. Even when we come to take pride in our own culture in everywhere. Take the case of Sanskrit, for example. As someone who had been very involved with Sanskrit, obviously I take great pride in the language, in the literature as a vehicle of the language itself because it has earliest linguistics in the world, phonetics, and literature, to think of Kalidas and Sudraka and

others, not easy to find a parallel and vehicle of science and mathematics which is not often recognized that Sanskrit was also that. And yet sometimes when I see, I attempt to argue that Sanskrit did not come to India with the Indo-European in the second millennium B. C., well of itself indubitable historical evidence. I get concerned about it not only because truth is extremely important, but also because it indicates that somehow the foreign connection would pollute us which, I think, is a dreadful thought because we have never been, in terms of intellectual history, a confined culture. We have been able to accept things from abroad extremely easily. The fact that Sanskrit came to India a primitive form and became a major flowering language, one of the richest in the world in India as it developed over hundreds of years is a matter of great pride for us.

Lots of foreigners know, it is often not recognized that the great Sanskrit grammarian, certainly the greatest in Sanskrit, possibly the greatest grammarian in any language, Panini, was actually an Afghani. He describes this in his own life history. He describes himself as Shalaturia Upakubhya from the village of Shalatur on the banks of Kuha, the river Kabul. Now, that doesn't reduce his being part of the great Indian tradition and the Sanskrit tradition. The language was enriched in every direction, from outside and it also went abroad in every direction. If you now go around whether you are in Thailand, or in Malaysia, or in Singapore, or in Korea, Indonesia, Indo-China, even China and Japan, you will find enormous reflection of the impact of Sanskrit in all these countries. It is not often recognized, for example, that a critically important cultural word in China mainly Mandarin, is in fact, derived from the Sanskrit word "Mantri". In fact, the Prime Minister of India is the Chief Mandarin of India, Yes, that is how it will be translated. And it is also not often recognized that the first printed book in the world was a Chinese translation of a Sanskrit book, *Vadrachedika Karnaparamika*, a Buddhist text, which was translated by Kumarajeeva around 410 A.D. Kumarajeeva himself is an example of a mixture. He was half-Turkish, half-Indian, went to China, headed the foreign languages institute, translated about 70 books, one of which was the *Vadrachedika Karnaparamika*, often known in English as the *Diamond Sutra*. That was the first printed book in the 9th century in China.

And, indeed, if one looks through the history, I am actually working at the moment on relations between India and China between the first century B.C. and 11th century A.D. It is interesting of Korea and Japan, it is interesting that nearly everyone of the earliest printing efforts are Buddhist printing efforts. These are attempts to get the word of Buddha across and finding a vehicle so that it could be reproduced again. There is a long tradition of Sanskrit and Indian culture in Hindi. Now, these, as I said, are part of the openness of India of accepting things from abroad, as well as giving things to abroad and interactive presence, which is extraordinarily important.

Similarly, when it comes to Maths, again I am depressed when people make claims about Vedic Maths. Vedic mathematics, which really is not a subject on which a great deal of mathematical sophistication could be founded. I may be one of the few persons, given my passion for Sanskrit, to have actually read a substantial part of the Vedas and it is certainly true that in the Atharva Veda you have a good deal of conundrums which could be seen as mathematical problem of a kind of brain teaser, puzzling kind. On the other hand, if you come to serious mathematics you get an absolute flowering of mathematics in India. But that is much later, that is in the Gupta Period in the first millennium 4th, 5th, 6th century.

From 4th century A.D. to about 12th century A.D., there is a kind of golden age of Indian mathematics producing a major departure from decimal systems, trigonometry. Astronomy is connected with it, one of the first clearistic relation that Earth is rotating around its axis and the Sun is not going around that, is Aryabhat in the very early years of the 5th century. The discussion on that was by Varamihir, by Brahmagupta, by

Bhaskara and outside by the Arab. Albaruni has extensive discussion as to whether Aryabhat could be right or not. This is a subject at times when mathematics, astronomy and the connected physics are flourishing. But it is also not flourishing on its own. There is interaction with the Arabs, with the Iranians. Indian astronomy is proceeding very fast and yet it never denies its connections with Greek astronomy, Roman astronomy, Arab and Iranian and Chinese astronomy.

One of the astronomical books called, *Paolico Siddhanta*, discusses longitudes and also discusses that the three places where longitudes are most important for us to know are Benaras, Ujjain and Alexandria. Now, the collection itself indicates a kind of open interactive attitude and that continues if you look at the Chinese side and interested to find that a great many, particularly in the 7th and 8th century, Chinese astronomy which is a big period of advance, a large number of astronomers involved are Indian and indeed a person called Gautam, whom the Chinese actually pronounced as Sultan, was in fact the President of the Chinese Board of Astronomy in the 8th century and also wrote the great compendium of Chinese astronomy called *Kiuan Tan Sen*. So, this is a kind of interactive period. So, what I want to emphasize here is this that we have reason to be proud of our tradition. But it is a dynamic interactive open tradition. It is not confined. It is not a Kupamanduka tradition. It is a tradition where we don't look for our flourishing at a time when they are not polluted by any kind of influence from anywhere, but we are a part of the world. Now, if you look at success today, whether it be Indian information technology or the fields of business or generally technology or Indian science, or Indian literature including successes in the Indian writing in foreign languages like English literature there is a clear sense of give and take of celebrating interactiveness, not a closeness that is very important. And when one looks at the history, mathematics in the world, we can see how India fits in. Just to give another example, I think, my 15 minutes are coming to an end. So, I think, I will have to stop. If you are interested in trigonometry, you might ask the question how are these terms derived. Take a term like sine. Why is it called sine? It is a very interesting history there. The first discussion about sine is by Aryabhat in the 6th century. He called it jiya, which is chord, jiya agha half cord. That is sine. If you know trigonometry, you know what the connection is. So, he called it jiya agha. The Arabs, and most of Indian mathematicians went to Europe via the Arabs, translated the jiya bit into jiva and it was known, as you know Arabic there are no vowels within so it was written with consonants J B. Now, jiva has absolutely no meaning in the Arabic. So, while the consonants J B stayed, soon the Arabs were referring to it by a familiar word, which also has the same consonant, namely, Jave and jave means a bay or a cove. It is a perfectly fine Arabic word. So, the later Arabic scholars in mathematics are calling that what Aryabhat via artha as J.

By the time in 1150, Gerardo of Cremona, an Italian mathematician, translates that into Italian. He chooses then the Italian word for a bay or a cove, which is Sinoos and the word sine that we know today, is derived from that. So, there is a peculiar story of migration from jiya to jiba to JB to Jave to Sinoos to Sine and it brings out the nature of mathematics itself. How it moves, why it has no frontier, and I think if we celebrate being Indians, which I do and I think all of you do, I think it is not that we see ourselves as a kind of flourishing Kupamanduka well-frog confined to a little well but a culture, a civilization, a people that has soared in the world, interacted with the world and not been afraid of interaction. It is the openness, external openness, and internal openness, in dialogue, openness in every sphere of life. That, I think, we celebrated as Indians. That is the reason why I would like to say, if I were asked the question what am I most proud of to be Indian and I am very proud of being an Indian? It is the openness of our heritage and our culture and we have to defend it, celebrate it, value it and fight for it.

Thank you very much.

Address by Mr Rajat Gupta, CEO, McKinsey, USA

Hon'ble External Affairs Minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, and Distinguished Guests,
It is a privilege to be here and a special privilege to follow Prof Amartya Sen.

Indian Pravasis span the globe today, excelling in all walks of life. And as I travel around the world, I am amazed and proud to find Indians everywhere, even in the remotest parts of the world. What strikes me about them is their strong drive, their spirit, their achievements against all odds, their commitment to their family and, above all, their yearning for India. Most of them have a strong desire to give something back, in small and big ways. It is that same urge to give back that has inspired my own involvement with India since I left 32 years ago. I have always received many times more than I have been able to give. It has been a labour of love that is very rewarding in itself. For me, the award of the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman by the Prime Minister this morning is a recognition of the substantial contributions of the ever-expanding Indian diaspora. On behalf of all Pravasis, I am honoured to receive this award and I hope that will provide inspiration for future generations of Pravasis to give back to India.

Despite all the good intentions, Indians Pravasis have often been criticized for not doing enough for their country of origin. We are seen as having fallen short of the kind of contributions that other expatriate communities like the Chinese or the Jewish, for example, have made to their home countries. There are many reasons for this and several recommendations are being made to rectify this such as creating a federation of Indian communities around the world. I heartily endorse all such initiatives. But you can read about all of this and more in a monograph titled "Indians without Borders" that my colleagues have prepared and which is available here today.

What I really want to talk about is the diaspora as a community and how to build this larger community, this extended family. Unless the Pravasis become a vibrant community connected with India, we will not be able to achieve what we are setting out to do. So, what are the characteristics of a community and what does it take to build one. John Gardner in his book on leadership talks about the ingredients of the community. I will touch on just four elements that I think are critical for us.

1. A community has a wholeness incorporating diversity. The Indian diaspora is very diverse, diverse of religions, languages, and states of origin, professions and so on. We expect and want diversity, but there is always dissension in the best of communities. But vital communities face these differences and resolve them. It is important that while Pravasis retain their diversity they do not lose sight of the common thread that holds them together and that is our Indianness.
2. A community has good internal communication. Members communicate freely with one another. There must be occasions when members gather. There must be provisions for forum and organizations willing to serve as meeting grounds. Each segment of the community must understand what the other segments need and want. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations are a terrific beginning of this.
3. A community has a caring trust and teamwork. A good community nurtures its members and fosters an atmosphere of trust. Members respect one another and value the integrity of each person. The Pravasi community must inculcate this attitude, which will make it possible for its members to work together on a common task by pooling their talents, energy, and resources.
4. Last but not the least, a community develops its young. The opportunities for individual growth are numerous and varied for all members. And the mature members ensure that the young grow up with a sense of obligation to that



community. The Pravasi community must inculcate this spirit in their children. In addition, it cannot support the new Indian immigrants that in their adopted countries and help them along. My one aspiration to Indians the world over is to build and truly inspire this community, a community that will make us all proud. A single picture, a single metaphor can convey better than a thousand words.

I would like to conclude with a picture that beautifully conveys the image of the diaspora as the strong community. A community that in turn makes India stronger. The picture is one of a Banyan tree. Those of us who grew up in India know of the very special qualities of a Banyan tree. Those of us who did not grow up knowing this tree would have surely heard of it.

So, what is special about the Banyan tree. Well, it grows in a very unique way. As the tree matures, it starts dropping aerial roots. These roots descend from the branches and take hold in the ground. They are very vulnerable initially, but over time they become big, strong, tree trunks. In a way, all of us, who are Pravasis living in cities, countries and continents overseas, are like these aerial roots. We grow in numbers and generations and these roots mature and grow stronger. And as the Banyan tree grows, it develops tens and hundreds of these roots. The surrounding trunks support the mother-trunk and the entire tree becomes extraordinarily strong. The Pravasi network is like the Banyan tree. It is truly on interconnected network. It holds certainly greater than the sum of its parts. Another characteristic of the Banyan tree is its huge canopy. The tree I used to visit in Calcutta's Botanical Gardens had a canopy that covered 3 acres. Imagine a single tree, that huge. The canopy is very much the essence of being Indian. The leaves and branches are our values, our culture, and our philosophy. They are our sense of being. They are our networks through which we share and give and take from each other. They nourish each of us as well as our children, our families, our communities, wherever we are in the country we have adopted. But the most interesting characteristic of the Banyan tree is that it is one of the longest living organisms on earth. These trees live for thousands of years. In this context, the Pravasi community is perhaps young. But I am sure, like the Banyan tree this community, its Indianness, its value, its culture are truly enduring and will live for ever.

As Ravindranath Tagore said, "You study a Banyan tree, you must not only know its main stem in its own soil, but also must trace the growth of its greatness in its further soil for then you can know the true nature of vitality.

Thank you.

Address by Prof C K Prahalad, USA

Hon'ble Minister, and Distinguished Guests,

I am deeply honoured by the privilege of being here in this company and also have a chance to share my aspirations for India. As we celebrate this day and the start of a wonderful dialogue amongst ourselves and with the rest of the world, I do not want to just dwell on our past. I want, with your permission, to think about the future because the future is what India is about with its rich heritage we cannot sacrifice her. We have spent a lot of time talking about the great Mahatma Gandhi coming back. Yes, he did. I want to take a minute to say what did he do that transformed not only India, but the rest of the world. Can we conceive of Gandhi as a strategist because he broke tradition. And I would like to start by saying you the fact that he studied in the UK, he understood Magna Carta, he understood individual's rights, and he understood the rule of law. When he came here he could not trust that anybody could live as a colonial, and anybody could be ruled in an oppressive way. So, he had to change.

And I would argue that he did two things. He first understood that you cannot fight the British with force. So, he was resource disadvantaged, but he changed the game in a fundamentally different way. I believe he unleashed the power of ordinary people. He brought women and men and the disenfranchised of this country to fight with a unifying goal. Resource constraint did not bother him. Creating a common shared agenda for "Poorna Swaraj". That was the motivation. I believe he did not stop with the elites even though you have used that. But he used ordinary people in his crusade. We have to learn something from him. And what I am going to argue is those of us who live abroad see India very differently. Because we understand what prosperity means, we understand what development means, just he understood what human freedom meant and the rights of the individual mean. We have a different view of this country. We also talk about why China is getting so much attention from the Chinese diaspora. I look at the two. Let us look at what Gandhi did differently and let us look at what we need to do to be a superpower comparable to China. I would like to suggest for us to become a developed country. For us to have prosperity and equitable systems and fairness to all individuals in this country, we cannot accept 6 to 8 per cent growth rate. I just believe if we grew at 6 and 8 per cent and China kept growing at 10 per cent to 12 per cent, in 20 years they will be eight times as large as we are. Either we have to give up our aspirations for superpower or we have to fundamentally change our inability to grow.

I know people look at all the possibilities and what is feasible. I am going to argue what is necessary. Freedom, "Poorna Swaraj" was necessary. We did not know how to get it. Same way today, I do not know how to grow at 10 per cent more or more than 10 per cent or certainly how to create 10-15 million new jobs. That's not an option for us. We have to invent a new way and that is what Gandhi started. Clarity to goal, let us have the courage to invent the means, let us change the paradigm on how we can grow. We had to reinvent ourselves. We are the children of two great traditions. I am the child of this great tradition. I also live and work in the United States, another great tradition. We have to continuously struggle to reinvent ourselves. So, all the people who are represented here are masters, are reinventing, harmonizing, understanding what principles to hold on to ourselves and what practices to change. India needs that ability to reinvent herself in a fundamentally different way, understanding what core principles to hold on to and what to change.

And finally, I would say, my view of Indianness is having lived for a long time in the United States is very clear. To me, Indianness is of being the best of breed. It's being:

1. It is about world class.
2. It's about personal excellence.
3. It's about candid and openness and it's about performance orientation and it's about success and it's about winning.

If there is one thing that I would like, all of you my friends, is being Indian, is being best, the best of breed. That's what it should stand for, not for poverty.

Finally, I know it is mandatory to say what we have learned from our past. Almost all of it has been either Sanskrit or Hindi. I grew up in Chennai. I say that's a part of India as well. So, I am going to take one sentence or one couplet from the great India's epistles Thiruvalluvar. He said, "*daivathan aahatherinam muyarchithan maivazhutha kulitharam.*" It is the most profound statement. I believe Americans live by this creed and I wish we would live by this creed as well. Say simply even if fate wills otherwise perseverance and hard work will succeed.

Thank you.



Address by Justice A M Ebrahim, Retired Supreme Court Judge, Zimbabwe

Hon'ble Minister, and Distinguished Guests,

I am, indeed, honoured to have been give an opportunity to address you all, this afternoon. We have already been enlightened by a distinguished and an intellectual array of speakers on the subject that I have been asked to make observations on. So, I will attempt to keep my comments brief.

I emanate from Zimbabwe, a country which became independent in April 1980 after a long and bitter struggle to remove a regime whose racist policies were on par with the apartheid regime which existed in South Africa at the time. We, the diaspora of Indian origin, forms a minute part of the population of Zimbabwe. The population of Zimbabwe is approximately between 12 and 13 million. We, the diaspora of Indian origin, number no more than 15,000 which is the total of population of all the adults and our children. Despite the limited nature and size of the population of the Indian diaspora, it has as a community played a proportionally significant part in the affairs of Zimbabwe. That it has been able to do this has been partly due to the wise counsel of the leadership of this great country, India. When it is said to us that we as persons who have made our permanent home in Zimbabwe should be loyal to Zimbabwe, whilst remaining good Indians. I was delighted to hear that message conveyed to us again today by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of this country. Let me say at once that this advice was in keeping with our own advice to our own community in Zimbabwe. Don't get me wrong. We are indeed proud of our Indian heritage and greatly impressed with what this country has achieved in the last two decades. The world has become a global village and interaction between the peoples of different ethnic origins will become even stronger and more important. As the concept develops hopefully making the world a more peaceful place to live in, we as persons of Indian origin who live in as many as 110 countries can play a significant part towards that goal. We can be a unifying force carrying the message that we have been hearing during the course of today.

What India has done for us as Zimbabweans of Indian origin is to plant that seed, which embraces that greater vision that I have alluded to earlier. So, when I am asked what can India do to forge a constructive relationship, my answer is more of the same. By maintaining close and cordial relationship India has with Zimbabwe, and believe me, it is a very cordial relationship and a very influential relationship. We, the persons of Indian origin, have avoided some of the unhappy incidents which have befallen others of similar persuasions in some other countries. By assimilating as Zimbabweans in our country, we as a minute population have played the following role in changing the face of the country. In politics, two Indian senators of Indian origin were appointed to the Upper House of the legislature of Zimbabwe, i.e., since Independence. In the Judiciary, I was appointed as a High Court Judge, then on to the Supreme Court. Being one of five judges in the Supreme Court, I served there for 12 years. Two other High Court Judges of Indian origin were appointed out of a panel of 22 judges. So, when you think about it, ladies and gentlemen, out of a panel of 27 judges from a small population of only 15,000, Zimbabwe has a proud record of having appointed three judges to the judiciary.

In the diplomatic field, two diplomats of Indian origin were given significant postings, one to Canada and another to Australia. There had been two appointments of Directors of Public Prosecutions, one of them myself, earlier on in my career. There has been an appointment of a person of Indian origin as the Deputy Attorney General.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that, in part, these contributions by these persons of

Indian origin to the society of Zimbabwe must be laid at the door of the Governments of this country by maintaining good relations with Zimbabwe before it became an independent country and during its tenure of independence. To forge a constructive relationship with us as a diaspora, I recommend more of the same. We, for our part, continue to marvel at the progress of this great country, the land of our heritage, the land of our culture, and the land of our forefathers. Long may it progress.

Ladies and gentlemen, some of the observations that I noted during the course of this morning were and let me put this way. We realize that we are, as Indians in Zimbabwe, a natural resource of India. Let me say, we are proud of this. We are happy to be part of the global Indian family. We do relate to India. We do want to build bridges between ourselves, India and the country that we live in, which is Zimbabwe. You have not only opened the doors to us, but to the people of Zimbabwe and we thank you for that.

Thank you.

**Ms Fatima Meer,
Director, Institute of Black Research, South Africa**

(Congregation hails)

I am proud to be related to all these countries and particularly to India whom we have always referred to as Mother India. We have always seen ourselves in South Africa as children of India. Not only those of us who have originated from India, but also others who have not originated from India, but who have been related to India in the great struggle against Colonialism, a struggle which was initiated in the world by Gandhi, who came to South Africa as a very young man inexperienced in many ways even in the practice of his own profession, law. It was in South Africa that he sharpened his teeth in so many different respects and it was in South Africa that his philosophy of Satyagraha was born. And I am particularly proud to say that it was a philosophy to which we contributed actively both in thought and in action. And that is, we, the South Africans, not only Indian South Africans but also African South Africans because two passive resistance or Satyagraha campaigns were launched by Mr Gandhi. I referred to him deliberately as Mr Gandhi because that is what he was at that time historically. It was only on this day at least a century back when he returned to this country that the mantle of Mahatma was bestowed on him, a mantle against which he in all his humility always protested against.

Now, when he returned on this day to India, a century ago, he returned and we very proudly, but at the same time with humility, claim that it were we who returned him as a Mahatma. And we have continued to celebrate him as a Mahatma in our country, although he was never a Mahatma in our country. He was just very simple, M K Gandhi or Gandhibhai, those who were close to him called him. And he was, of course, very generous in his own relationship with us in South Africa.

The word "diaspora" seems to have become very firmly entrenched in designating ourselves or in referring to ourselves. But it is a word that I abhor. I certainly am not a diaspora of India. We, Indian South Africans, have had to struggle hard to claim our South Africanness and that is something that we jealously guard. And we do not want in any way to be deprived of our South Africanness. We are not a diaspora of India in South Africa because we claimed South Africa for our own and in order to entrench that claim, we have had to struggle hard and long alongside our South African brothers and sisters.

Diaspora, we must remind ourselves repeatedly, may be an attractive term and an easy



term to use. But it is related in particular to Zionism, a creed which is far from what Gandhi spelt out and quite the opposite to the inclusiveness that we have been talking about. Diaspora is a term that is even today practised in a very apartheid sense as an exclusive which seems to justify the oppression of the people, the original inhabitants of Palestine which was then eradicated from the world map and on it there arose the exclusive state of Israel.

Our Prime Minister stated very clearly this morning that we as Indians who settled outside India did not go there in any sense of colonialism or in any sense of wanting to possess something that was not ours, but rather to share and contribute. And we shared ourselves, we shared Gandhi with India and we contributed his philosophy to ourselves, to the rest of Africa. After Gandhi left the shores of South Africa, another passive resistance or Satyagraha campaign was enacted in 1946 and on the shoulders of that campaign at United Nations, the entire world came to understand the cruelty that was apartheid, that was racism. And India lived away. Had India not been a member of the United Nations and had not already gained her freedom, we in South Africa would not have been able to pursue our own ideals to the extent and in the manner in which we pursued them. After our third passive resistance of Satyagraha campaign and after that, we as Indians and the Africans of the African National Congress combined together and there was the fourth Satyagraha campaign which led to our eventual liberation from the yoke of racism.

So, today as South Africans we can join India shoulder to shoulder and pave the way, perhaps we hope, for another world revolution and that is that of conquering the philosophy and the practice of capitalism, which goes back to colonialism, which is part and parcel of colonialism. And we hope that we would be able to introduce a new economic theory and a new equality throughout the world. In other words, we have to revive Gandhian economics and until we succeed in doing this, we do not deserve to even bear the name of Gandhi and claim him as our own.

Thank you very much.

Address by Prof Dipak C Jain, Dean, Kellogg School of Management, USA

Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Mr Yashwant Sinha, Distinguished Members of the Panel, Beloved Friends and Guests,

This day is very special for me personally. It was January 9th, 1983 when I landed in Dallas, Texas. So, to me, it seems a 20-year reunion, or real union. I went there as a student to do a Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics and today I returned here as the Dean of a Business School as there is a saying, "Man proposes, God disposes". I never heard of marketing when I left this country and got to be a Professor of Marketing. And I really believe that this is due to the foundations in education systems, the knowledge we acquired here and what I think the previous speakers both Mr Gupta and Mr Prahald mentioned, the true essence of our brand is the Indianness and Mr Prahald calls it a sense of excellence. I view that as three words. When we tap into this excellence, tap into this Indianness, the word tap is what I always believe in Talent, Aspiration and Perseverance.

That's what really is being an Indian or the Indianness. Many people ask me to describe an Indian. I always say of the people that I have dealt with, an Indian means a brilliant mind with emotional soul. So, it is the sense of care, the sense of commitment, and a sense of devotion.

Now, the topic today was India and the Diaspora – Forging A Constructive Relationship.

To me, the real challenge for the Indian diaspora is two-fold.

One is internal and the other is external. Internal is that we Indians who are abroad. It's very important for us that we continue to implant this Indianness in the coming generations because if we fail to do that it would be a great loss. For us, this Indianness is the *sanskar* that we have grown up with and we as parents ought to make sure that we take all steps to maintain and cultivate that.

The second is what the Hon'ble Prime Minister mentioned this morning, which is that India is not after the riches, but after the richness of the experience and ideas.

To me, this, even today, is the beginning or what I would describe as the plantation of the seed of the Banyan tree that Mr Gupta mentioned. But in order for us to make this tree keep growing and flourishing, we need to make sure it gets due sunlight and water. We need to create a forum where we can exchange the experiences that we have acquired over time. The outcome or the accomplishment that we all have accomplished, I would say, is the sight. The process to reach the outcome is the insight. The journeys that we all have undertaken are something that would be a source of inspiration and I think that it is our responsibility, members of the Indian diaspora, to create a forum. We have the resources, we have the energy such that we tap into the Indianness and try to make sure that we leverage on these experiences and ideas. I met several people during the break who are willing to do a lot for India and they were asking me how can we contribute. And that, I think, is a very important question. But I don't think it is the responsibility of the Indian Government to just make sure that they provide the forum. In the words of C K Prahalad, I would say the Indian diaspora should be a co-creator of that forum. And if we all work together, we can really make India next to none. And I can tell you any help we can provide and at least I can provide, that assurance I can make and I am very proud to be here today and keep continuing the light and make sure that we all are there to keep this light glowing for years to come.

Thank you.

Address by Prof Devesh Kapur, Faculty of Arts & Science, Harvard University, USA

Hon'ble Minister and Friends,

My observations concern those policies that are related to the diaspora. But there are further implications for those who are residents here. I think, there are five principles we need to keep in mind as we think of diaspora-related policies.

1. The overall policies regime should not create an incentive structure whereby it is easier to gain recognition in India by leaving India than by staying here.
2. On economical issues, especially issues such as preferential economics and financial benefits, I strongly believe that the diaspora should be treated at par with foreigners and only marginally different from residents, here. Else, it will simply create opportunities for arbitrage that will benefit the diaspora much more than it will benefit India.
3. In sharper contrast when we look at social, cultural and civil rights, the diaspora should be treated on par with residents here. This is especially the case in the right to work. There are three major barriers right now. The first barrier comes from professional associations here. You can practise law here if you go to the worst law school in India. But if you go to Harvard Law School, you will not be allowed to practise law here. The second is a problem with the employment policies of the Public Sector, which are very shortsighted. It's an irony that Indian engineers work on defence contracts when they go to the US. But the Indian diaspora cannot do so

- if it wants to do so here in the Public Sector. Third, this is where perhaps lies the biggest bang for the buck. That concerns for higher education. I think Indian liberalization has by and large bypassed higher education and most institutions are in a poor shape. The diaspora can contribute the most by setting up institutions of higher education which are not only an asset to residents here, but also would provide a mechanism for second-generation Indians to come and spend a semester or a year here and too that very cheaply.
4. The fourth principle is on political rights. And here I want to stress that unless there is a tax obligation, dual citizenship should not carry with it the right to vote since it could perversely lead to a situation of representation without taxation. Diasporas should well remember that the citizenship is a social contract and if it brings with it certain rights it also brings with it certain duties and obligations and historically those obligations have been taxation and military service.
 5. Finally, I just want to stress that India's diaspora is usually a minority in the country of settlements. Both the Indian State and the diaspora must realize that claims of perfection of the diaspora in their countries of settlements are weakened if minorities here are not protected.

Thank you.

Mr Bharatkumar J Shah, Chairman of Al Mustaneer Trading Co LLC, Dubai

(Speech is in Hindi)

Main ne kaha, bhai aur hum kisko sunaye. Jisko sunna hai who to chaley gayey. Bole nahin idhar secretaries baithe hain who synergy. Toh who to bahut achhi bat hai kyon ki country to wohi rule kartey hain, minister Saab to karte kaisey kare? Aur meri bateein jara hat ke hain. Kyon ki Arjun ko khali who machhli ki ek ankhi dekhi thi. Waise main to hamari khadi wale desh ki wyatha aur katha sunaunga, dekhiye humari kya problems hai, agar secretary Saab baithe hai finance ke to who kuchh bat karengey.

Let me tell you about Ibn-e-Batuta, a greatest philosopher. In 1520 when he came to Yemen, a port of Aden, he has written in his book and I quote "waha eden ke andhar fishermen aur thodey Hindu baniya rahatey hain." Uska matlab tha traders from Gujarat. This is the oldest record of the Indian diaspora in 1520. Since then, the contemporary business with Europe is done only through the Middle East. We are 4 million people there on our money and the economy of the country has survived. Out of 4 million, 70 per cent are semi-skilled workers, skilled workers, labourers. Barring little expense, they are sending their total money to this country. If you take very roughly 400 Rials or 400 Dirhams per month per person, we are sending 14 billion rupees to India since 1979 but unfortunately we always get injustice. Aap log ne golden plate mein PIO card diya, usmey kyon liya who to aajtak main nahin samajh tha hon. Ke kyon nahin liya. To Aap ne unko dus saal se main fight kar rahan hoo, Sinhasaab chaley gaye isliyey man ne unko mera naman unko pakda diya, padengey to. To dus saal se main minnat karta hoon, begging karta hoon, every stage mein aata hoon shayad meri lifespan mein who log meri baat suney hai ke mailroom nahin hain. Saab yeh bhi mera last show ho. Ke hum to itne hi kehtey hain ke we are asked, we are subjected to harassment by the medium- and low-level bureaucracy.

We are subjected to harassment by the medium- and lower-level bureaucracy. The question I was asked at the customs at the time of immigration, at the time of admission in the school of the NRIs, at the time of buying and selling property. At the time of selling property, they are telling us prove that you are an NRI. Now, how to prove that we are NRIs. We can't carry our accordion type of passport. I have explained to Dr Singhvi. I have given about nine memorandums. For nine years I have been giving it.

We don't want anything. Yeh hamare bhai ko mubarak ho. We want nationality. "Hamare passport me khali Aap pakka kar do, ke bhai that the holder of this passport is an NRI, say, for one year, say for till the visa is valid, something like this. Until now nobody has listened to us. I don't know what is the problem.

Vijay Kelkar's Committee has suggested the removal of NOR. It was a welcome step to the coming Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. Just before a week, he has declared that he has suggested that our NOR status is removed. You must know that if the NOR status is removed in that particular year, even by default or by mistake you have crossed 183 days, not that you have to give income tax on Indian income, but you have to declare your global income and then you have to give income tax on it.

This is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I don't know why all my learned speakers have not taken this issue of NOR. Now, it is your duty as listeners to take up this matter.

Our resident brothers think we are the pampered children. Unfortunately, because of the bureaucratic hurdles, these concessions, these facilities do not reach the medium and low-level bureaucracy. If it reaches, they don't read it. If they read, they don't understand it. If they understand, they don't digest it. If they digest, they don't implement it.

Address by Mr Dhundev Bauhadoor, GOPIO, Mauritius

Mr Chairman, the Former Prime Minister of Fiji, Brother Mahendra Chaudhry, Co-Chairperson, Distinguished Panellists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am from Mauritius, the country of our Sir Shivsagar Ramgoolam, but today I will speak as the Chairman of GOPIO International and on behalf of the 20 million PIOs living in some 135 countries of the world, I thank and congratulate the Government of India for its new policy towards the overseas Indians. It is a really a U-turn from the Nehruvian policy of indifference which went on for the last 50 years after the independence of India. Pt Jawaharlal Nehru had said during the Mau-Mau movement of Kenya and I quote "if they (means the PIOs) adopt the nationality of that country we have no concern with them."

Prof Dubey of JNU in a recent article comments, "Indians were considered more of an obstacle than an asset in her diplomatic relations with Africa." Situations today have changed. Since we have come to India this time, we have been seeing, reading in the newspapers and magazines. One magazine has foretitled "the Global Indian doing us proud" and it carries 90 per cent of the articles about PIOs. We the people of Indian origin, the PIOs, have come to India to formally proclaim to the world that we are indeed a global family.

We have also come on a pilgrimage to Mother India to salute the cradle of humanity, the home of the most ancient culture and civilization, the Vishwa Guru, the teacher of the world. India, to the PIOs, is a great nation. She has given shelter to even those who came to loot, to conquer, and to enslave her. She was torn apart and burnt several times by the invading aliens. But like the phoenix she has risen from the ashes. Ladies and gentlemen, in spite of the various setbacks she has suffered for centuries, India will rise again to attain her pristine glory. *Inshallah*.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are the children of one mother, but living in some 135 countries of the world. There is no other nation in the world with such a wide variety

and diversity over race, religion, language, culture, tradition and philosophy than Mother India. In spite of its diversity, we are all united by a common heritage and perhaps a common destiny.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have been listening to all the speeches since morning. I have a long-written speech, but I would like to comment on what has been said. We feel that the emphasis in this conference is more on NRIs than PIOs. NRIs are Indians, but residing in the UK, USA, and all these countries. PIOs are not Indians, but the people of Indian origin living in the South of the world. We have been observing the change in the attitude of the Indian Government and the Indian officials. The emphasis is towards those who hold Dollars, Pounds, Rials and all these things. Those people who hold a Rupee are not considered to be real Indians. They have nothing to do with the people in Fiji. When Mahendra Chaudhary was held hostage for 28 days, India refused to comment. She opened her mouth only when a small country like Mauritius intervened with the United Nations. This cannot continue. If India is to play her role as a Mother, she must protect her children wherever they are.

We must not forget Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa. People know everything now. So, instead of saying goody-goody, good morning, namaste, namaskar, we must consider very seriously the burning problems. I will end by telling you three problems.

We have been speaking with the high-powered committee. I still don't know how, why, 1,000 US dollars were being charged for a PIO card. Now, we have decided to bring it down to three. What is the calculation, I don't know? I leave it to the officials to work it out again.

They have said that only upto four generations will be granted the PIO card. But what about the fifth generation. No more people of Indian origin after five generations? Do we forfeit our right to be called the people of Indian origin after five generations? Please consider this question.

Just like this gentleman said, Mr Shah, a lot of harassment is done to the PIOs at the airports, in the shops, and in the holy places. We are discriminated against very, very negatively. Please, the people of FICCI are here, the people of the travel agencies are here. Try to do something about giving us a proper welcome when we come to our Mother. I have no time.

Thank you very much.

Address by Mr Thomas Abraham, USA

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: I will take less than two minutes. I was not sure whether I was going to be in this panel. I was put on a chair of a session. Next day, so I was sitting in the back waiting for our Science and Technology Panel - A committee meeting to be held at 4 o'clock. It's already 5 o'clock.

About 13 years back, a few of us, about 12 of us, travelled to several countries of the world. At that time, there was no Internet. Communication was very difficult. Our team went to the Caribbean countries, Far Eastern countries, all over Europe. That was the beginning of proposing the first conference of overseas Indians in New York, 1989 September. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was the Honorary Patron of the convention. 3,000 delegates from 26 countries including the three Prime Ministers and Presidents who came from PIOs were there, Mahendra Chaudhary, Basudev Pandey and Dr Cheddy Jagan. That evolved the First Global Organization of People of Indian Origin.

Several people here mentioned that we have to organize ourselves within. Dr Jain mentioned about it. Rajat Gupta mentioned about it. We had to go through that process. It was something we are starting something new and I am glad to inform you that we have set up an organization, GOPIO, (gopio.net). We want you to go and check this web site and see how you can connect yourself in the global community. We went through this process with a lot of experience and at this time what I want is to just read a declaration, which we passed in Zurich in the year 2000. This is a historic Zurich declaration of the people of Indian origin by the people of Indian origin passed at the GOPIO Convention 2000. "When any person of Indian origin is abused, attacked or discriminated against in any part of the world because of his or her ethnicity, all persons of Indian origin around the world will deem such an act and action directed against all of them and will stand together in the pursuit of justice and peace."

Thank you.