

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT THE COMMUNITY RECEPTION**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: October 4, 2017**

It is a privilege for me to meet the members of the Indian community in Ethiopia. Thank you for welcoming me with such warmth and affection.

It is my first visit out of India as President and I have been struck by the extraordinary goodwill, love and affection for India in this country.

Our community the world over has contributed in building our global relations. This assertion is even more true in your case. You have been at the center of India-Ethiopia relations.

As teachers and educators you have given a helping hand to nation building in this country. As entrepreneurs, you have created economic opportunities and imparted skills to local people. And as tech-professionals and workers you have added knowledge value and expertise to the Ethiopian Industry.

Our contemporary people-to-people connect is just one part of the India-Ethiopia story. We have been engaging and embracing our Ethiopian brothers and sisters for ages. Our forefathers first came to this biblical land, long long ago. They came as merchants and monks, as explorers and

travelers. They came with spices and thought, and took back gold and wisdom of Abyssinia.

Centuries later, our engagement became more sedentary. Indian merchants and artisans started settling down here. This may be the family story of many of you present, especially those from Gujarat and western India.

There may be in this august gathering, proud descendants of those who fought for Ethiopia and are remembered for their gallantry and sacrifice in the World Wars. Theirs was a selfless war; they fought not to capture an inch for themselves, but to protect others in far-away lands.

**Friends,**

With your hard work and dedication, you have built a place of respect in the Ethiopian society. You have retained and carried forward our values, family traditions and work ethic while adapting very well in this adopted home.

If I look at India-Ethiopia bilateral relations of the last few years: we have an economic partnership which is thriving; our contribution in capacity building of institutions in this country is well-recognized; the training and scholarship opportunities that we offer are sought after; our development partnership has grown from strength-to-strength; and our cultural ties have continued to flourish. I must emphasize that all this has been possible due to the valuable support we have received from the Indian community here.

Your approach to and engagement with the Ethiopian people has also been helpful. Through cricket tournaments and Bollywood musicals you have captured their hearts and minds. Or what else can possibly explain that people here have learnt Hindi not to express themselves but to hum and sing Bollywood tunes.

In promoting Indian way of life, you have done well to explain the thought and science of yoga, and the benefits of Ayurveda to people around you. It is inspiring for me to learn that the International Day of Yoga is celebrated each year with much fanfare in this country. And with the legendary Haile Gebrselassie by your side, you could not have asked for a better partner and support!

This is a land of diversity, of multiple languages and varied cuisines; of music, dance and drama; much like ours. You must take advantage of the local eclectic culture and showcase and share our own cultural diversity.

Both India and Ethiopia have a large young population. You must make special efforts to connect with the youth in this country. They are the future of this society, and it is from them that new ideas for tomorrow's progress would come. This will also help you germinate your own thoughts to provide solutions for a better world, be it tackling climate change, cleaning our sacred rivers or skilling people.

In my address on the eve of the 71st Independence Day recently, I had said that as citizens of India – whether we live at home or abroad – we

must ask ourselves how we can add to our country's pride. I also wanted that each of us must find a way to give back to society.

The role you can play is by taking up noble causes, remaining connected to the local community and in making yourself relevant to the host country. This can be done by joining hands to project our image, our soft power and our strengths that we as a country bring to the table and can offer to our international partners.

By this we would have contributed our bit in the building of new India, done our duty to our motherland while living outside the country.

Our Government is keen to strengthen its ties with our people abroad. New schemes have been launched and old ones made simpler. You must take advantage of the OCI programme. It connects you with the land of your forefathers forever.

To our community here, I assure you that we will be there behind you, to hold and support you when you need us. Be it Operation Rahat or providing help to people in Libya or USA, we have kept our promise. Ours is a government that cares, a government that provides.

**Friends,**

Today India is on a path of high economic growth. There is confidence and hope among our youth. A new India is taking shape. The rise of India is opening new opportunities for collaboration with the external world.

Few months back, we implemented our landmark reform on taxation. The Goods and Services Tax has made India, for the first time since our independence, into a single unified tax entity. This will bring immense benefits to our economy.

Good governance is the mantra of the new India we aspire to build. We have been successful in tackling corruption and are committed to establishing the highest ethical standards in public policy.

Through our financial inclusion programme, the JAN DHAN YOJANA, we have brought new hope in the lives of over 300 million poor people. We have also had similar success with our UJJWALA scheme to provide clean cooking fuel to over 29 million rural women.

Our desire is to harness the benefits of digital technology, next generation infrastructure and climate-smart practices to create future living spaces.

With India's growing stature and recognition, come greater expectations and responsibilities. We want to do more as a development partner for Ethiopia. You can be a critical connect between the two countries in this endeavour.

**Friends,**

Our Government seeks sustained and proactive engagement with our overseas community. The purpose of this engagement is to provide an

opportunity to familiarise you with the transformational changes taking place in India. The dialogue with the Diaspora is also aimed at providing possibilities and platforms through which you can participate in India's growth and development and give back to your motherland. I invite you to participate and partner us in this process.

On our part, we will continue to work closely with Indian community organisations for the welfare of the Indian community abroad. They say in Africa you must do what Africans do and think. I would therefore end by quoting an African proverb: *"Return to old watering holes for more than water; friends and dreams are there to meet you"*

I thank you all for attention. I wish you and your families the best of health and happiness.

Thank you and Jai Hind!