

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN THE HONOUR OF
THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA, MR MATAMELA CYRIL
RAMAPHOSA**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, January 25, 2019

1. It is an honour for me to welcome you Mr. President and Madam First Lady on your first State Visit to India. Your visit comes at a very special moment. We are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and the 100th birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela. For our two leaders, who walked parallel political pathways, this coincidence could not bring a sharper focus on the shared legacy they have left behind, for us and for the entire humanity.
2. And as we talk of their lives, I must recall what Mahatma Gandhi said while leaving South Africa for good – and I quote- *“This subcontinent has become to me a sacred and dear land, next only to my motherland. I leave the shores of South Africa with a heavy heart, and the distance that will now separate me from South Africa, will but, draw me closer to it, and its welfare will always be a matter of great concern”* - unquote. These prophetic words, Mr. President, have continued to guide us, as we work to enhance and deepen our special friendship and our strategic partnership.
3. Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela belong not just to India and South Africa, but to the entire world. To commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, we have launched an artificial limb fitment programme - “India for Humanity”. In doing so, we are inspired by his universal message and as much by the South African spirit of *“Ubuntu”*, that is - the spirit humanity and compassion towards others.

Mr. President,

4. Our economic partnership is a key pillar of our relationship. Indian Industry is much enthused by your economic policies and approach. On our part, we have undertaken path-breaking economic reforms to attract international businesses and to propel our growth. We invite South African companies to partner us in Make In India, Digital India,

Clean India and Smart City programmes. And we invite new-age stakeholders, from innovators to incubators, from start-ups to serial entrepreneurs, to join our partnership.

5. We must also work to capitalise on the opportunities posed by the 4th Industrial Revolution. The digital world has much to offer to our people. I am happy that soon we would be able to share with you and with other countries in Africa the benefits of our tele-medicine and tele-education programmes: e-Vidya-Bharati and e-Aarogya-Bharati.

Mr. President,

6. Your Rainbow nation has a colourful slice of India and our multicultural fabric several weaves of South Africa. From cuisine to cricket, and from babootie to biryani, there is much that our people share and relish. Let us continue to celebrate our shared heritage and our values.

Mr. President,

7. I offer my warm congratulations to South Africa as you now sit on the United Nations Security Council for the third time. We will work with you to make the UN more effective, more equitable, and more reflective of today's realities. We will also work together for a just, representative and democratic global order that has a voice and a role for one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India.

8. On that promising note, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to join me in raising a toast to :

- the good health and wellbeing of President Ramaphosa and Dr. Motsepe;

- the continued progress and prosperity of the people of South Africa; and

- the everlasting friendship between India and South Africa.

Ngiyabonga!

Ndolivhuwa!

Thank you.