

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, February 25, 2020

1. It is an honour to welcome you Mr. President and your esteemed delegation on your first State Visit to India. The past two days have been very special for us. Our people have rejoiced in the warmth of our friendship and the glow of our ties.

Mr. President,

2. Our relations are deep and abiding. Today, the ever-expanding orbit of our partnership encompasses the map of every single human endeavour. As economic partners, we have come a long way. The trading journey that began in the early 19th century, with ice from New England being offloaded on the shores of Madras, has today blossomed into a robust economic partnership, laced with expanding trade, innovative investments and new-age technology.

3. As the world's largest democracies, we are deeply connected with each other through our people and their aspirations. The bedrock of Indian and American society has been hardworking middleclass families and that's what makes us understand each other instinctively. Over 4 million people of Indian origin have made America their home. They are a living bridge between the American Dream and our vision of New India. Our bilateral canvas has many folds, but none more impressive than the one painted by the growing Indian student community in the US.

Mr. President,

4. You have been a friend of India in every sense. Time and again, you have shown your affection towards us in the most spectacular manner, whether by lighting the Diwali lamp at the White House, by joining our Prime Minister on stage to celebrate our partnership in Houston or by mesmerizing our people by your address at the Motera Stadium yesterday. Your charisma and the grace of the First Lady have won you millions of admirers in India. Your visit has, indeed, opened a new chapter in our ties.

Mr. President,

5. A century ago, American enterprise led to proliferation of apple orchards in our countryside, bringing prosperity to millions. Today, as we sit down to savour the fruits of that venture, Indian produced Red Delicious American apples; we will once again be reminded of the depth of our engagement, and as much the prospects of our future endeavours.

6. On that delectable note, Mr. President:

- I wish you and First Lady, greater health and happiness;
- I wish the American people everlasting peace and prosperity, and
- I wish our friendship ever greater warmth and affection.

Thank you.