



**MINISTRY: FINANCE**  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH ON OCCASION OF THE AWARD OF  
PRAVASI BHARATIYA SAMMAN**

**Pravin Gordhan**  
**Minister of Finance, South Africa**  
**9 January 2010**

Your Excellency, President Patil,  
Minister Vayalar Ravi  
Ministers of State  
Fellow Awardees  
Distinguished guests

Your Excellency, President Patil I bring you warm fraternal greetings from President Zuma and the government of South Africa.

My fellow awardees and I are profoundly humbled and deeply honoured by the decision of the government of India to bestow this award upon us. We come from a wide range of countries and from different parts of the globe. Today you give recognition to awardees who have made contributions to civil society, government, business, sciences, various professions and philanthropic causes. We sincerely thank you and the Indian government for this generous gesture.

In each of the societies we belong to, we have contributed to the welfare and development of our own communities and our brothers and sisters from other communities as we advanced as a single nation and country. In each of our countries we have been mindful of the general good of all people and have built resilient national bonds while aware of our many identities.

South Africa (SA) has the largest number of people of Indian origin in the world. SA has the historic privilege of being home to the two greatest icons of the twentieth century, Mahatma

Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Both these great individuals have given the world and our two countries, a lasting and powerful legacy - a legacy of righteousness, freedom, justice, peace and harmony. A profound legacy of uncompromising resistance to oppression, inequality, greed, chauvinism, and sectarianism. Their legacy requires us and future generations to strengthen the values of truth, solidarity, sharing and integrity. They both sought the simultaneous and interactive development of the moral person and the moral society. They replaced self-interest with national interest without minimising the importance of self.

In the past few years, your Excellency, your government has recognised the contribution of other South Africans such as Ahmed Kathrada, Fatima Meer, Billy Nair among others, for their contribution to the liberation of SA from the firm grip of apartheid to a proud democratic, non-racial, non-sexist SA. We thank you for honouring our struggle for democracy and thank the government and people of India for their bold and unequivocal support spanning many decades.

Our former president Nelson Mandela, paid tribute to India and its leaders in a letter he wrote on August 3, 1980 while he was still in prison on Robben Island. He wrote, "It would be a grave omission on our part if we failed to mention the close bonds that have existed between our people and the people of India, and to acknowledge the encouragement, the inspiration and the practical assistance we have received as a result of the international outlook of the All-India Congress." India's contribution to the struggle against apartheid will never be forgotten!

It is a remarkable coincidence that today, January 9, is the day when Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from SA in 1915, to lead the struggle against British colonial rule for independence and peace in this country. Mandela said of the Mahatma; "India is Gandhi's country of birth; South Africa his country of adoption. He was both an Indian and a South African citizen. Both countries contributed to his intellectual and moral genius, and he shaped the liberatory movements in both colonial theaters".

This year, 2010 marks 150 years since the first Indians arrived in SA on November 16, 1860. It is also 20 years since Nelson Mandela was released from prison to become the first President of a democratic SA. This year we will celebrate, with all South Africans, the achievements and contributions of South Africans of Indian origin to the development and democratisation of SA. We will celebrate the fact that in 150 years, we have overcome our past as cutters of cane, artisans and small business owners with no democratic right to become full citizens of a democratic SA. These changes happened largely through the efforts of Mr Mandela and the African National Congress.

We receive this award at a time when the world is still reeling from the worst economic meltdown since the depression of 1924. In the past 16 months, the world has witnessed economic turbulence not seen in most of our lives. Globally, more than 50 million people have lost their jobs. That's 50 million households in distress. While this recession has caused huge damage to the financial and real economies throughout the world, it is the human cost in livelihoods, dignity, and happiness of millions of people that remains most severe.

The causes of the economic crisis have been spoken about on many different platforms and I don't want to belabour the point here – safe to say that unscrupulous human behaviour gave rise to much of this crisis. There is a lot to reform and improve, mostly to strengthen the ability of the poorer members of the international community to develop and to become a bigger voice in the global village - India plays an important role in this process. Even as we search for a new economic paradigm, let us recognise that no system in the world is sustainable if it is not underpinned by a sense of morals, ethics and values. No system can succeed if it persistently ignores the plight of the poor.

During Nelson Mandela's Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Address he said "Let the efforts of us all, prove that Martin Luther King was not a mere dreamer when he spoke of the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace being more precious than diamonds or silver or gold". The world needs leadership based on the values and legacy of Gandhi and Mandela.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century rid the world of colonialism and oppression in large part. As we begin the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we must all take responsibility to lay a solid foundation for a better, more just, more fair and a more equal world. A world in which the poor have as much to gain as the privileged. A world in which developing countries have as much influence as developed countries in shaping the globe's destiny. A world in which our children and grandchildren can say we have taken Gandhi's and Mandela's vision of a better world a significant step forward.

I conclude by inviting all of you to attend the Soccer World Cup in South Africa in June which will be an important milestone for Africa and Southern Africa. On behalf of all the awardees, I would like to again thank the Indian government for the hospitality and generosity.

Thank you.