

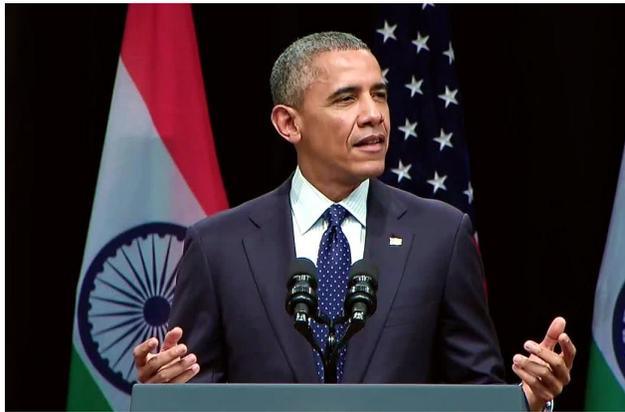


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Barack Obama

Address to the People of India

Delivered 27 January 2015, Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi, India



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Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Neha, for what a wonderful introduction. Everybody, please have a seat. Nothing fills me with more hope than when I hear incredible young people like Neha and all the outstanding work that she's doing on behalf of India's youth and for representing this nation's energy and its optimism and its idealism. She makes me very, very proud. And I'm sure -- I think they may be her -- is that somebody related to you? Okay. Because we just had a chance to meet, and she's beaming with pride right now sitting next to you. Give Neha a big round of applause once again.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, to all the students and young people who are here today, to the people of India watching and listening across this vast nation -- I bring the friendship and the greetings of the American people. On behalf of myself and Michelle, thank you so much for welcoming us back to India. Bahoot dhanyavad.

It has been a great honor to be the first American President to join you for Republic Day. With the tricolor waving above us, we celebrated the strength of your constitution. We paid tribute to India's fallen heroes. In yesterday's parade, we saw the pride and the diversity of this nation -- including the Dare Devils on their Royal Enfields, which was very impressive. Secret Service does not let me ride motorcycles. Especially not on my head.



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I realize that the sight of an American President as your chief guest on Republic Day would have once seemed unimaginable. But my visit reflects the possibilities of a new moment. As I've said many times, I believe that the relationship between India and the United States can be one of the defining partnerships of this century. When I spoke to your Parliament on my last visit, I laid out my vision for how our two nations can build that partnership. And today, I want to speak directly to you -- the people of India -- about what I believe we can achieve together, and how we can do it.

My commitment to a new chapter between our countries flows from the deep friendship between our people. And Michelle and I have felt it ourselves. I recognized India with the first state visit of my presidency -- where we also danced to some pretty good Bhangra. For the first time, we brought Diwali to the White House. On our last celebration here, we celebrated the Festival of Lights in Mumbai. We danced with some children. Unfortunately, we were not able to schedule any dancing this visit. *Senorita, bade-bade deshon mein.* You know what I mean. Everybody said, by the way, how much better a dance Michelle was than me -- which hurt my feelings a little bit.

On a more personal level, India represents an intersection of two men who have always inspired me. When Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was protesting racial segregation in the United States, he said that his guiding light was Mahatma Gandhi. When Dr. King came to India, he said that being here -- in "Gandhi's land" -- reaffirmed his conviction that in the struggle for justice and human dignity, the most potent weapon of all is non-violent resistance. And those two great souls are why we can gather here together today, Indians and Americans, equal and free.

And there is another link that binds us. More than 100 years ago, America welcomed a son of India -- Swami Vivekananda. And Swami Vivekananda, he helped bring Hinduism and yoga to our country. And he came to my hometown of Chicago. And there, at a great gathering of religious leaders, he spoke of his faith and the divinity in every soul, and the purity of love. And he began his speech with a simple greeting: "Sisters and brothers of America."

So today, let me say: Sisters and brothers of India -- my confidence in what our nations can achieve together is rooted in the values we share. For we may have our different histories and speak different languages, but when we look at each other, we see a reflection of ourselves.

Having thrown off colonialism, we created constitutions that began with the same three words -- "We the people." As societies that celebrate knowledge and innovation, we transformed ourselves into high-tech hubs of the global economy. Together, we unlock new discoveries -- from the particles of creation to outer space -- two nations to have gone to both the Moon and to Mars. And here in India, this dynamism has resulted in a stunning achievement. You've lifted countless millions from poverty and built one of the world's largest middle classes.



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And nobody embodies this progress and this sense of possibility more than our young people. Empowered by technology, you are connecting and collaborating like never before -- on Facebook and WhatsApp and Twitter. And chances are, you're talking to someone in America -- your friends, your cousins. The United States has the largest Indian diaspora in the world, including some three million proud Indian-Americans. And they make America stronger, and they tie us together -- bonds of family and friendship that allow us to share in each other's success.

For all these reasons, India and the United States are not just natural partners. I believe America can be India's best partner. I believe that. Of course, only Indians can decide India's role in the world. But I'm here because I'm absolutely convinced that both our peoples will have more jobs and opportunity, and our nations will be more secure, and the world will be a safer and a more just place when our two democracies -- the world's largest democracy and the world's oldest democracy -- stand together. I believe that.

So here in New Delhi, Prime Minister Modi and I have begun this work anew. And here's what I think we can do together. America wants to be your partner as you lift up the lives of the Indian people and provide greater opportunity. So working together, we're giving farmers new techniques and data -- from our satellites to their cell phones -- to increase yields and boost incomes. We're joining you in your effort to empower every Indian with a bank account.

And with the breakthroughs we achieved on this visit, we can finally move toward fully implementing our civil nuclear agreement, which will mean more reliable electricity for Indians and cleaner, non-carbon energy that helps fight climate change. And I don't have to describe for you what more electricity means. Students being able to study at night; businesses being able to stay open longer and hire more workers; farmers being able to use mechanized tools that increase their productivity; whole communities seeing more prosperity. In recent years, India has lifted more people out of poverty than any other country. And now we have a historic opportunity with India leading the way to end the injustice of extreme poverty all around the world.

America wants to be your partner as you protect the health of your people and the beauty of this land, from the backwaters of Kerala to the banks of Ganges. As we deliver more energy, more electricity, let's do it with clean, renewable energy, like solar and wind. And let's put cleaner vehicles on the road and more filtration systems on farms and villages. Because every child should be able to drink clean water, and every child should be able to breathe clean air. We need our young people healthy for their futures. And we can do it. We have the technology to do it.

America wants to be your partner in igniting the next wave of Indian growth. As India pursues more trade and investment, we want to be first in line. We're ready to join you in building new infrastructure -- the roads and the airports, the ports, the bullet trains to propel India into the future. We're ready to help design "smart cities" that serve citizens better, and we want to develop more advanced technologies with India, as we do with our closest allies.



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We believe we can be even closer partners in ensuring our mutual security. And both our nations have known the anguish of terrorism, and we stand united in the defense of our people. And now we're deepening our defense cooperation against new challenges. The United States welcomes a greater role for India in the Asia Pacific, where the freedom of navigation must be upheld and disputes must be resolved peacefully. And even as we acknowledge the world as it is, we must never stop working for the world as it should be -- a world without nuclear weapons. That should be a goal for all of us.

I believe that if we're going to be true global partners, then our two nations must do more around the world together. So to ensure international security and peace, multilateral institutions created in the 20th century have to be updated for the 21st. And that's why I support a reformed United Nations Security Council that includes India as a permanent member.

Of course, as I've said before, with power comes responsibility. In this region, India can play a positive role in helping countries forge a better future, from Burma to Sri Lanka, where today there's new hope for democracy. With your experience in elections, you can help other countries with theirs. With your expertise in science and medicine, India can do more around the world to fight disease and develop new vaccines, and help us end the moral outrage of even a single child dying from a preventable disease. Together, we can stand up against human trafficking and work to end the scourge of modern day slavery.

And being global partners means confronting the urgent global challenge of climate change. With rising seas, melting Himalayan glaciers, more unpredictable monsoons, cyclones getting stronger -- few countries will be more affected by a warmer planet than India. And the United States recognizes our part in creating this problem, so we're leading the global effort to combat it. And today, I can say that America's carbon pollution is near its lowest level in almost two decades.

I know the argument made by some that it's unfair for countries like the United States to ask developing nations and emerging economies like India to reduce your dependence on the same fossil fuels that helped power our growth for more than a century. But here's the truth: Even if countries like the United States curb our emissions, if countries that are growing rapidly like India -- with soaring energy needs -- don't also embrace cleaner fuels, then we don't stand a chance against climate change.

So we welcome India's ambitious targets for generating more clean energy. We'll continue to help India deal with the impacts of climate change -- because you shouldn't have to bear that burden alone. As we keep working for a strong global agreement on climate change, it's young people like you who have to speak up, so we can protect this planet for your generation. I'll be gone when the worst effects happen. It's your generation and your children that are going to be impacted. That's why it's urgent that we begin this work right now.



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Development that lifts up the lives and health of our people. Trade and economic partnerships that reduce poverty and create opportunity. Leadership in the world that defends our security, and advances human dignity, and protects our planet -- that's what I believe India and America can do together. So with the rest of my time, I want to discuss how we can do it. Because in big and diverse societies like ours, progress ultimately depends on something more basic, and that is how we see each other. And we know from experience what makes nations strong. And Neha I think did a great job of describing the essence of what's important here.

We are strongest when we see the inherent dignity in every human being. Look at our countries -- the incredible diversity even here in this hall. India is defined by countless languages and dialects, and every color and caste and creed, gender and orientations. And likewise, in America, we're black and white, and Latino and Asian, and Indian-American, and Native American. Your constitution begins with the pledge to uphold "the dignity of the individual." And our Declaration of Independence proclaims that "all men are created equal."

In both our countries, generations have worked to live up to these ideals. When he came to India, Martin Luther King, Jr. was introduced to some schoolchildren as a "fellow untouchable." My grandfather was a cook for the British army in Kenya. The distant branches of Michelle's family tree include both slaves and slave owners. When we were born, people who looked like us still couldn't vote in some parts of the country. Even as America has blessed us with extraordinary opportunities, there were moments in my life where I've been treated differently because of the color of my skin.

Many countries, including the United States, grapple with questions of identity and inequality, and how we treat each other, people who are different than us, how we deal with diversity of beliefs and of faiths. Right now, in crowded neighborhoods not far from here, a man is driving an auto-rickshaw, or washing somebody else's clothes, or doing the hard work no one else will do. And a woman is cleaning somebody else's house. And a young man is on a bicycle delivering lunch. A little girl is hauling a heavy bucket of water. And I believe their dreams, their hopes, are just as important, just as beautiful, just as worthy as ours. And so even as we live in a world of terrible inequality, we're also proud to live in countries where even the grandson of a cook can become President, or even a Dalit can help write a constitution, and even a tea seller can become Prime Minister.

The point is, is that the aim of our work must be not to just have a few do well, but to have everybody have a chance, everybody who is willing to work for it have the ability to dream big and then reach those dreams.

Our nations are strongest when we uphold the equality of all our people -- and that includes our women. Now, you may have noticed, I'm married to a very strong and talented woman. Michelle is not afraid to speak her mind, or tell me when I'm wrong -- which happens frequently.



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And we have two beautiful daughters, so I'm surrounded by smart, strong women. And in raising our girls, we've tried to instill in them basic values -- a sense of compassion for others, and respect for themselves, and the confidence that they can go as far as their imaginations and abilities will carry them. And as part of Michelle's work as First Lady, she's met with women and girls around the world, including here in India, to let them know that America believes in them, too.

In the United States, we're still working to make sure that women and girls have all the opportunities they deserve, and that they're treated equally. And we have some great role models, including here today the former speaker of our House of Representatives -- Nancy Pelosi -- the first woman speaker of the House, and my great partner.

And here in India, it's the wives and the mothers who so often hold families and communities together. Indian women have shown that they can succeed in every field -- including government, where many of your leaders are women. And the young women who are here today are part of a new generation that is making your voice heard, and standing up and determined to play your part in India's progress.

And here's what we know. We know from experience that nations are more successful when their women are successful. When girls go to school -- this is one of the most direct measures of whether a nation is going to develop effectively is how it treats its women. When a girl goes to school, it doesn't just open up her young mind, it benefits all of us -- because maybe someday she'll start her own business, or invent a new technology, or cure a disease. And when women are able to work, families are healthier, and communities are wealthier, and entire countries are more prosperous. And when young women are educated, then their children are going to be well educated and have more opportunity.

So if nations really want to succeed in today's global economy, they can't simply ignore the talents of half their people. And as husbands and fathers and brothers, we have to step up -- because every girl's life matters. Every daughter deserves the same chance as our sons. Every woman should be able to go about her day -- to walk the streets or ride the bus -- and be safe, and be treated with respect and dignity. She deserves that.

And one of the favorite things about this trip for me has been to see all these incredible Indian women in the armed forces, including the person who commanded the Guard that greeted me when I arrived. It's remarkable, and it's a sign of great strength and great progress.

Our nations are strongest when we see that we are all God's children -- all equal in His eyes and worthy of His love. Across our two great countries we have Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, and Jews and Buddhists and Jains and so many faiths. And we remember the wisdom of Gandhiji, who said, "for me, the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree." Branches of the same majestic tree.



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Our freedom of religion is written into our founding documents. It's part of America's very first amendment. Your Article 25 says that all people are "equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion." In both our countries -- in all countries -- upholding this fundamental freedom is the responsibility of government, but it's also the responsibility of every person.

In our lives, Michelle and I have been strengthened by our Christian faith. But there have been times where my faith has been questioned -- by people who don't know me -- or they've said that I adhere to a different religion, as if that were somehow a bad thing. Around the world, we've seen intolerance and violence and terror perpetrated by those who profess to be standing up for their faith, but, in fact, are betraying it. No society is immune from the darkest impulses of man. And too often religion has been used to tap into those darker impulses as opposed to the light of God. Three years ago in our state of Wisconsin, back in the United States, a man went to a Sikh temple and, in a terrible act of violence, killed six innocent people -- Americans and Indians. And in that moment of shared grief, our two countries reaffirmed a basic truth, as we must again today -- that every person has the right to practice their faith how they choose, or to practice no faith at all, and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination.

The peace we seek in the world begins in human hearts. And it finds its glorious expression when we look beyond any differences in religion or tribe, and rejoice in the beauty of every soul. And nowhere is that more important than India. Nowhere is it going to be more necessary for that foundational value to be upheld. India will succeed so long as it is not splintered along the lines of religious faith -- so long as it's not splintered along any lines -- and is unified as one nation.

And it's when all Indians, whatever your faith, go to the movies and applaud actors like Shah Rukh Khan. And when you celebrate athletes like Milkha Singh or Mary Kom. And every Indian can take pride in the courage of a humanitarian who liberates boys and girls from forced labor and exploitation -- who is here today -- Kailash Satyarthi. Our most recent winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace.

So that's what unifies us: Do we act with compassion and empathy. Are we measured by our efforts -- by what Dr. King called "the content of our character" rather than the color of our skin or the manner in which we worship our God. In both our countries, in India and in America, our diversity is our strength. And we have to guard against any efforts to divide ourselves along sectarian lines or any other lines. And if we do that well, if America shows itself as an example of its diversity and yet the capacity to live together and work together in common effort, in common purpose; if India, as massive as it is, with so much diversity, so many differences is able to continually affirm its democracy, that is an example for every other country on Earth. That's what makes us world leaders -- not just the size of our economy or the number of weapons we have, but our ability to show the way in how we work together, and how much respect we show each other.



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And, finally, our nations are strongest when we empower our young people -- because ultimately, you're the one who has to break down these old stereotypes and these old barriers, these old ways of thinking. Prejudices and stereotypes and assumptions -- those are what happens to old minds like mine. I'm getting gray hair now. I was more youthful when I first started this office. And that's why young people are so important in these efforts.

Here in India, most people are under 35 years old. And India is on track to become the world's most populous country. So young Indians like you aren't just going to define the future of this nation, you're going to shape the world. Like young people everywhere, you want to get an education, and find a good job, and make your mark. And it's not easy, but in our two countries, it's possible.

Remember, Michelle and I don't come from wealthy backgrounds or famous families. Our families didn't have a lot of money. We did have parents and teachers and communities that cared about us. And with the help of scholarships and student loans, we were able to attend some of the best schools of the world. Without that education, we wouldn't be here today. So whether it's in America, or here in India, or around the world, we believe young people like you ought to have every chance to pursue your dreams, as well.

So as India builds new community colleges, we'll link you with our own, so more young people graduate with the skills and training to succeed. We'll increase collaborations between our colleges and universities, and help create the next India institute of technology. We'll encourage young entrepreneurs who want to start a business. And we'll increase exchanges, because I want more American students coming to India, and more Indian students coming to America. And that way, we can learn from each other and we can go further. Because one other thing we have in common Indians and Americans are some of the hardest working people on Earth.

And I've seen that -- Michelle and I have seen that in a family here in India. I just want to tell you a quick story. On our last visit here, we visited Humayun's Tomb. And while we were there, we met some of the laborers who are the backbone of this nation's progress. We met their children and their families as well -- and some wonderful young children with bright smiles, sparks in their eyes. And one of the children we met was a boy named Vishal.

And today, Vishal is 16 years old. And he and his family live in South Delhi, in the village of Mor Band. And his mother works hard in their modest home, and his sister is now in university; she wants to become a teacher. His brother is a construction worker earning his daily wage. And his father works as a stone layer, farther away, but sends home what little he makes so Vishal can go to school. And Vishal loves math, and mostly, he studies. And when he's not studying, he likes watching kabaddi. And he dreams of someday joining the Indian armed forces. And we're grateful that Vishal and his family joined us today. We're very proud of him, because he's an example of the talent that's here. And Vishal's dreams are as important as Malia and Sasha's dreams, our daughters. And we want him to have the same opportunities.



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Sisters and brothers of India, we are not perfect countries. And we've known tragedy and we've known triumph. We're home to glittering skyscrapers, but also terrible poverty; and new wealth, but also rising inequality. We have many challenges in front of us. But the reason I stand here today, and am so optimistic about our future together, is that, despite our imperfections, our two nations possess the keys to progress in the century ahead. We vote in free elections. We work and we build and we innovate. We lift up the least among us. We reach for heights previous generations could not even imagine. We respect human rights and human dignity, and it is recorded in our constitutions. And we keep striving to live up to those ideals put to paper all those years ago.

And we do these things because they make our lives better and safer and more prosperous. But we also do them because our moral imaginations extend beyond the limits of our own lives. And we believe that the circumstances of our birth need not dictate the arc of our lives. We believe in the father working far from home sending money back so his family might have a better life. We believe in the mother who goes without so that her children might have something more. We believe in the laborer earning his daily wage, and the student pursuing her degree. And we believe in a young boy who knows that if he just keeps studying, if he's just given the chance, his hopes might be realized, too.

We are all "beautiful flowers from the same garden...branches of the same majestic tree." And I'm the first American President to come to your country twice, but I predict I will not be the last. Because, as Americans, we believe in the promise of India. We believe in the people of India. We are proud to be your friend. We are proud to be your partner as you build the country of your dreams.

Jai Hind! Thank you.