

**Speech Delivered by High Commissioner on 16
August 2017 while inaugurating the Shared History
Festival of India in South Africa**

Tonight, we honour our countries through collaboration, our people with compassion and our shared histories through art.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great joy and excitement that I stand here to welcome all of you to a night where our Indian heritage speaks for itself in South Africa. A night where I am honoured to witness the power of the arts in a country known for its warmth and reconciliation. As well as standing here on an occasion which celebrates India and South Africa through vibrancy.

Across my career in the Indian Foreign Service, I have come to find that the arts stand for unity throughout disorder. They stand for self-expression and now, more than ever, they are a necessity. To be an artist, means to tell a story which has the potential to ignite powerful change within the world. And it is one of the many threads which binds culture and diversity.

The Upanishads once said:

“Human beings cannot live without challenge. We cannot live without meaning. Everything ever achieved we owe to

this inexplicable urge to reach beyond our grasp, do the impossible, know the unknown.”

It is art which challenges us to look at our world with depth, possesses the potential to drive our curiosity and allows us to express humanity. We learn to unite through shared emotion, embrace diversity and admire contrast.

Thus, it is an honour to have violin maestro Dr. L. Subramaniam, Ambi Subramaniam and their team in our midst tonight. Where, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said, we are in “violin-land, where all is delicacy and sweetness and harmony.” It is the serenity and strength of their music which will undoubtedly make this night special.

Moreover, art is an idiosyncratic catalyst for peace – a notion deeply embedded within the roots of both India and South Africa. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi are two men from our two countries whose views on attaining peace through peace remain as timeless symbols of humanity. Both aimed to unite fractured countries through the solidarity through their words. They strived to unite the diversity with integrity.

And now ladies and gentlemen, “there is nothing more to be said or to be done tonight” so let us hand over the violin to Dr. L. Subramaniam and Ambi Subramaniam.

Thank you.