

INTRODUCTION TO SOUTH AFRICA-INDIA: PARTNERSHIP IN FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT, 1995¹

“I am convinced, your Excellency, that we are poised to build a unique and special partnership- a partnership forged in the crucible of history, common cultural attributes and common struggle”.

-President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa at banquet hosted by President S. D. Sharma of India, New Delhi, 25 January 1995.

The emergence of India into independence after a long struggle for freedom against the mightiest imperial Power, and the victory of the South African people in their equally long and difficult struggle against racist domination represent the two main landmarks in the closing of the sad chapter of colonial-racist oppression in human history. India and South Africa now look forward to a new era of friendship, cooperation and joint action not only for mutual benefit but in the cause of peace and human solidarity which have inspired their common struggle,

The agreements concluded by the two countries on January 25, 1995. for "multi-faceted and mutually beneficial cooperation"- "in the political, economic, trade and scientific spheres as well as in the field of technology, industry, transport, energy, culture, public health, ecology, education. tourism, sports and exchange of information" - are almost unprecedented in scope in the history of inter-state relations. They reflect the bonds of friendship developed over the centuries, with the shared experience of oppression by imperialism and racism and, above all, the solidarity displayed by the peoples of the two nations and their liberation movements during the course of their struggles.

Neighbours Across the Sea

India and South Africa, neighbours across the sea, have had cultural and trade relations since ancient times. These were interrupted when they came under alien domination and replaced by new bonds. Soon after the European adventurers set up settlements at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, Indians began to be transported there and forced into slavery to work in their homes and farms. When slavery was abolished in the nineteenth century, the British administrations in India and Natal organised the transport of Indian workers as indentured labour to develop the plantations, mines and railways in South Africa under semi-slave conditions. As a result, there are now over a million Indian South Africans and perhaps an even larger number of "Coloured" and "white" South Africans of Indian ancestry.

¹ Introduction to T. G. Ramamurthi (ed.) *South Africa India: Partnership in Freedom and Development*. New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations and New Age International Publishers Limited, 1995.

With the consolidation of the power of British imperialism in both countries came a new stage in the relations between the two peoples. The modern national movement developed in India somewhat earlier than in South Africa. A major episode in the history of that movement was the resistance of the Indian community in South Africa against racist oppression early in this century. Their *satyagraha*, under the leadership of M.K. Gandhi, led to united national action in India and inspired all other oppressed people in South Africa. It was one of the most significant events of the twentieth century and will remain a bond between the two peoples.

As the struggle for freedom developed in the two countries, the links between the national movements of the two countries were fortified.

Mahatma Gandhi knew, and spoke with respect, about African leaders like John Dube, the first President of the African National Congress, Walter Rubusana, the first African member of the Cape Provincial Council, and Dr. Abdulla Abdurahman, the leader of the Coloured people. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru met Mr. Josiah Gumede, President of the African National Congress, and other South Africans at the Congress against Imperialism in Brussels in 1926 and was impressed by their spirit.

During the Second World War, fought ostensibly for freedom, British imperialism and the racist government in South Africa made it clear that the Allied declarations of war aims do not apply either to India or to South Africa. The Indian National Congress launched a "Quit India" movement and the young militants of South Africa demanded that imperialism "quit Africa". India attained independence soon after the war, and a multiracial mass democratic movement emerged in South Africa.

The newly-independent India was privileged to make a historic contribution, at considerable sacrifice, to the struggle of the South African people which was unduly prolonged as their oppressors derived sustenance from the cooperation of imperialist Powers.

India's sacrifices cannot be compared to those of the frontline States in Africa which suffered grievously from aggression and destabilisation by the apartheid forces in the 1980s. Its financial contributions could not match those of some prosperous nations which joined the anti-apartheid forces in the 1970s. But no country equalled India in consistent diplomatic, political, economic and other support to the cause of liberation in South Africa for well over half a century. As President Mandela said in Delhi on 25 January 1995:

“You took up our battle as your own battle. Now that we have been victorious, it cannot be said too often that our victory is also India's victory”.

The following is a brief review of India's actions in support of the struggle for

liberation in South Africa from 1946 to the establishment of the first non-racial democratic government of South Africa in May 1994, and the subsequent agreements for extensive cooperation between the two countries. It is followed by selected documents on the subject - only a fraction of hundreds of statements, speeches, etc., by the Indian government and organisations in numerous national and inter-national fora.

Partnership with the South African People

India had direct experience of South African racism since tens of thousands of Indians were lured into Natal in the nineteenth century with the promise of equal rights under the law, only to become victims of constant attempts to subject them to the inhuman oppression inflicted on the indigenous Africans. In the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914, and the Cape Town Agreements of 1927 and 1932, the Indian community and the Government of India were assured of a respite from further discriminatory measures but again the promises proved illusory. With the white monopoly of political power, white parties vied with each other to inflame and pander to racial prejudices so that there was a constant whittling away of the meagre rights of the non-white people. The struggle of the Indian people and the intervention of the Indian Government enabled the Indian community to preserve some rights denied to Africans; but the Indians were subjected to several restrictions not applied to Africans.

This experience was a source of education for Indian South Africans and for India. They became increasingly convinced that the small Indian community could not gain and preserve its civil rights so long as the system of discrimination and white monopoly of political power remained. That brought them ever closer to the indigenous African people.

Mahatma Gandhi had always insisted that the Indians should never press for any rights if they conflicted with the vital interests of the Africans, the sons of the soil. As long ago as 1908, he spoke of his vision of a South Africa where "all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not yet seen."

Other Indian leaders like Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were outspoken in calling on the Indians in South Africa to identify themselves with the African majority in their legitimate struggle. Public opinion in India welcomed the emergence of a new leadership in the Indian community in the late 1930s, advocating uncompromising resistance against racism and joint action with other oppressed South Africans.

In that context, the determination of the South African regime to enact further legislation to oppress and humiliate Indians - at a time when India was emerging into independence - outraged opinion in India and ushered in the partnership of India with the oppressed people of South Africa in the struggle for a revolutionary

transformation of South Africa.

Historic Initiatives in 1946

Early in 1946, the South African Indian Congress decided on passive resistance in protest against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act. It sent a delegation to India to consult with Mahatma Gandhi and other Indian leaders, and appeal to the Viceroy, for support to the struggle. It called on the Indian government, in case of intransigence by South Africa, to apply economic sanctions against the latter and withdraw the office of its High Commissioner in South Africa.

Public sentiment in India was so strong that the Viceroy's Executive Council recalled the High Commissioner from South Africa and lodged a complaint with the United Nations in June 1946 and instituted an embargo on trade with South Africa in July. Such action by a British colony against a British dominion was unthinkable but for the pressure of public opinion in India.

It was recognised in India that the decision would involve serious sacrifice, as South Africa then accounted for no less than 5.5 per cent of India's exports and 1.5 per cent of imports. This trade, with a very favourable balance, was particularly difficult to give up in the critical economic situation in 1946. The sanctions were also painful as they curtailed communication between Indian South Africans and their ancestral homeland. But Indian public opinion was united in supporting the measures and never showed any regret. (This was in sharp contrast to the attitude of Western governments which, in later years, professed abhorrence of apartheid, but pleaded that they could not afford sanctions against South Africa though South Africa accounted for less than one per cent of their foreign trade.)

By the time the Indian complaint was discussed in the United Nations General Assembly in November-December 1946, an interim national government had been established in India with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister. The Indian delegation to the Assembly, led by Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, stressed the wider implications of racism in South Africa. It assisted a multi-racial deputation from South Africa led by Dr. A.B. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress, which arrived in New York to contact the United Nations and delegations of its Member States. The resolution adopted by the General Assembly not only brought international attention to the racial situation in South Africa but recognised that it was a matter of legitimate international concern.

At the same session of the General Assembly the Indian delegation was able to frustrate the efforts of the South African government to secure approval for the annexation of South West Africa (Namibia) and was highly praised by African leaders in South Africa and Namibia.

India also helped to develop public support in the West for the struggle of the African people in South Africa. Mrs. Pandit and Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon addressed a public meeting in New York with the South African deputation; the India League in London set up a South Africa Committee to publicise the cause of the black people in South Africa; and many friends of Indian independence began actively to espouse the cause of freedom in South Africa.

United Nations discussions led to no amelioration of the situation of Indians in South Africa. Instead, the new government which came to power in May 1948, espousing apartheid, proceeded to enact even more obnoxious legislation such as the Group Areas Act of 1950. But India's persistent diplomatic efforts ensured awareness of the inhumanity of apartheid and the United Nations General Assembly deplored that policy by a large majority in 1950.

The Western Powers, especially Britain and the United States, reacted with great hostility to India as it confronted their ally and tended to discredit their plans for Africa in partnership with the South African regime. They even succeeded in preventing any resolution on South Africa at the second session of the General Assembly in 1947. The problems encountered by India soon after independence facilitated their desire to protect South Africa from international action. India's hopes of building friendship with all nations were undermined. The Government and people of India, however, were not willing to compromise on the issue of colonialism and racism. Opposition to racism in South Africa remained a major preoccupation of Indian foreign policy.

Promoting World Opposition to Apartheid

In South Africa, the Indian passive resistance movement of 1946-48 became the precursor of a united mass democratic movement of all the South African people. Several Africans, Coloured people and white democrats joined the passive resistance to show their solidarity. On the other hand, the Indian community rushed to help the African mine workers during their historic strike in August 1946.

India encouraged and supported the growing unity of the oppressed people in South Africa. Pandit Nehru, in a message to the Indian community in September 1946, said:

“The struggle in South Africa is... not merely an Indian issue... It concerns ultimately the Africans who have suffered so much by racial discrimination and suppression... Therefore, the Indians in South Africa should help in every way and cooperate with the Africans”.

When Dr. Yusuf M. Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, the leaders of the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses, visited India in March 1947, they received a warm welcome from all parties not only in admiration of the struggle they led but in

approval of the agreement they had signed with Dr. A.B. Xuma, on the eve of their departure from South Africa, for cooperation between the African and Indian Congresses.

The Indian Congresses suspended passive resistance after the apartheid regime came to power in May 1948. Dr. Dadoo and Dr. Naicker on their release from prison in July, called for a "united democratic front" against racist domination and proceeded to plan joint action with the African National Congress.

On June 26, 1952, the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress jointly launched the Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws in which over 8,000 persons of all racial origins went to prison by defying selected racist laws.

Opinion in India was greatly enthused. The unity of all the oppressed people in the struggle against racism, and their choice of non-violent defiance as the means, aroused admiration. Pandit Nehru wrote in a letter to the Chief Ministers of states in India that the revolt of all the oppressed people had overtaken the Indian question and "it is right that it should be so." The Indian National Congress collected funds from the public to help the Defiance Campaign. The Indian government joined with twelve other Asian-African governments to request the United Nations General Assembly consider the grave situation in South Africa. The African National Congress sent a message to Prime Minister Nehru welcoming his initiative.

The Indian delegation led the debates in the United Nations on this matter until Ghana and other independent African States could take over. The efforts of India and the Asian-African Group helped publicise the enormity of discrimination and repression in South Africa as well as the struggle of the people for freedom. The South African government, for its part, launched vicious propaganda against India, alleging that it had expansionist designs in Africa. It asked India to close its High Commission in South Africa as it had become a useful channel of communication for the oppressed people of South Africa.

The Defiance Campaign in South Africa was suspended in 1953 because of stringent laws providing for brutal sentences, including whipping of non-violent protesters. The ANC, however, was greatly strengthened during the campaign, with its membership increasing from some three thousand to a hundred thousand. The Coloured People's Congress, the Congress of Democrats (for whites) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions were soon organised and formed a "Congress Alliance" with the ANC and SAIC to continue united resistance despite the difficulties. In June 1955, the alliance organised the Congress of the People - the most representative gathering of the South African people until then - which adopted the Freedom Charter as the banner of the struggle for liberation.

During this period, the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April 1955

helped greatly to promote international contacts and support for the freedom movement in South Africa. India and other sponsors of the Conference excluded the racist South African government from the list of invitees. Pandit Nehru invited the two representatives of the African National Congress - Mr. Moses Kotane and Moulvi I.A. Cachalia - to accompany him to Bandung and helped them to meet the Presidents and Prime Ministers of many nations.

Despite repeated appeals, the South African government continued on its disastrous course, enacting further oppressive laws and resorting to ever-increasing repression to curb the resistance of the people. The major Western Powers, however, continued amicable relations with that regime, considering it a valuable ally in the "cold war" and resented India's support to the liberation movement. They managed to secure the dissolution of the Commission on the Racial Situation in South Africa which had been set up on the initiative of India in 1952. They exerted their influence to ensure that the United Nations resolutions were "moderate" and toothless. But not only Asian-African States but growing segments of public opinion in the Western countries began to support the struggle in South Africa.

Chief Albert J. Lutuli, President-General of the African National Congress, wrote in his autobiography:

“The way in which India at the United Nations has taken up cudgels on behalf of the oppressed South African majority and dragged the whole scandal of apartheid into the open, has heartened us immeasurably”.

Sharpeville Massacre and After

The Sharpeville massacre of March 21, 1960, outraged world opinion and there were public demands in many Western countries for action. Boycott South Africa movements had been launched in Britain and some other Western countries from 1959. Soon after the massacre, there were boycotts of South Africa by governments, dockworkers and others in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

Prime Minister Nehru compared the Sharpeville massacre to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 which marked a turning point in India's struggle for independence. On his proposal the Indian Parliament adopted a resolution conveying its deep sympathy to the African people of South Africa.

India joined the African States in calling on the United Nations Security Council to consider the situation in South Africa. It supported their demands for international sanctions against South Africa. It provided passports and assistance to Mr. Oliver Tambo, then Deputy President of the African National Congress, and Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, President of the South African Indian Congress, who had left clandestinely from South Africa at the request of their organisations to seek

international support and action. It contacted all Asian-African countries to consult on coordinated action.

India took another decision of great political significance. Indian leaders had already recognised that the problem of discrimination against Indians in South Africa was linked to the larger problem of apartheid and the inhuman oppression of the African majority. Prime Minister Nehru said in a speech in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of Parliament) on 15 December 1958:

“The question of the people of Indian descent in South Africa has really merged into bigger questions where not only Indians are affected but the whole African population along with... any other people who happen to go to South Africa and who do not belong to European or American countries”.

After the Sharpeville massacre, he went further in a statement in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) on 28 March 1960:

“The people of Indian descent in South Africa, as we all know, have had to put up with a great deal of discrimination and suffering and we have resented that. But we must remember that the African people have to put up with something infinitely more and that, therefore, our sympathies must go out to them even more than to our kith and kin there”.

Consequently, on India's initiative, the item on the treatment of Indians in South Africa was dropped from the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly in 1962.

With the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, India welcomed the leadership of African States in pressing for action on South Africa, and actively supported their initiatives. It helped ensure attention to the problem in all specialised agencies of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organisations, as well as international trade union confederations, sports bodies and numerous other non-governmental organisations and conferences. Indian nationals and people of Indian origin played a prominent role in the anti-apartheid movements and activities around the world.

Many-sided Action

While the major Western Powers stubbornly opposed and vetoed mandatory economic sanctions against South Africa, it was now possible, with the increasing number of newly independent States in the United Nations and other international organisations, to secure large majorities for resolutions recommending measures to exert pressure on the South African regime and to assist the oppressed people of South Africa and their national liberation movement. But it was important to ensure that all supporters of liberation fully implement the resolutions and exert their influence to persuade Western and other countries to join in international

action, India made an outstanding contribution in this respect.

India was scrupulous in implementing all the resolutions of the United Nations and other bodies against apartheid.

Though India had already imposed comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, it looked into possible further action after the United Nations General Assembly resolution of November 6, 1962, calling for specific measures against South Africa, and sent a detailed report to the United Nations.

In 1964, when the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid appealed for assistance to the political prisoners and their families in South Africa, India was the first country to make a contribution.

In 1967, India provided facilities, as well as financial and other assistance to the ANC, to maintain its Asian Mission in New Delhi.

India not only signed and ratified the United Nations International Convention for the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid but was one of the few countries to enact legislation to implement the Convention.

At the request of the liberation movement, India used its influence to counter the manoeuvres of the South African regimes to divide the oppressed people of South Africa. In 1981, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi urged the Indian community in South Africa to boycott elections to the "South African Indian Council", an apartheid body. In 1984, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, then Minister of External Affairs, appealed to the Indian community to boycott the elections to the "tricameral Parliament" set up under a new racist constitution, and Mrs. Gandhi issued an appeal, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, to the Coloured and Indian people. These appeals helped ensure effective boycotts.

In May 1986, India, alone of all the countries of the world, declared the Parliament members elected under this constitution prohibited immigrants.

India has been strict in implementing the sports and cultural boycott of South Africa. In 1974, for instance, the All India Lawn Tennis Association refused to play South Africa in the Davis Cup tennis finals, thus foregoing the possibility of championship. Action by India was responsible for persuading the British cricket authorities to prohibit test cricketers from playing in South Africa.

India provided assistance of various kinds to the South African liberation movement, especially the African National Congress-including financial assistance to the Asian Mission of the ANC in New Delhi, food, medicines and clothing.

India made regular contributions to United Nations funds for assistance to South

Africans. It also contributed to the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa and the OAU Assistance Fund for the Struggle against Colonialism and Apartheid. In addition, non-governmental organisations in India made public collections for the liberation movement.

Special mention must be made of the provision of educational facilities in India. A scholarship program for Africa was initiated by India as early as 1946. When the United Nations and later the Commonwealth began educational and training programmes, India not only made financial contributions but provided places in educational institutions though the available places were inadequate for the needs of Indian nationals. Hundreds of students from South Africa graduated from Indian institutions or received in-service training in India. They include many doctors and other professionals, as well as several activists in the struggle for liberation.

Action in the Non-Aligned Movement, Commonwealth and Other Bodies

India, as a founding member and twice Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement gave great attention to concerting action in support of the South African liberation movement. Of particular significance was the initiative of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 in proposing the establishment of the AFRICA Fund to assist frontline States and the liberation movements. Under India's Chairmanship, this Fund has been by far the most successful fund of the Movement. The Government of India made an initial contribution of over \$ 40 million and substantial amounts were contributed by the public for the liberation movements of South Africa and Namibia.

India also made a significant contribution through the Commonwealth as the largest of its members. Pandit Nehru played a crucial role in obliging South Africa to withdraw from the Commonwealth in 1961, thus beginning the isolation of the apartheid regime from numerous international bodies. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi used her influence to counter moves in the United Kingdom in the 1970s to resume supplies of arms to South Africa. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi secured Commonwealth sanctions against South Africa, despite the opposition of the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao helped ensure an orderly and coordinated withdrawal of sanctions against South Africa, in consultation with the ANC, so as to facilitate negotiations for a nonracial democratic State.

India's initiatives were also important in international sports bodies in which the African countries had little representation or influence.

Admiration and Affection for Nelson Mandela

India's identification with the South African struggle was reflected in the admiration for Nelson Mandela. In recognition of his contribution and in support for his cause, India gave him the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International

Understanding for the year 1979. The citation read in part:

“In every age and on every continent a few men become symbols of mankind's dreams and of the invincible resolve to hold aloft the torch, whatever the hazards... Nelson Mandela of South Africa is such an embodiment of the heroic spirit...

“Today he is behind bars but his spirit is free. And he knows that his cause will triumph and the tyranny of apartheid will end soon.

“In honouring Nelson Mandela with the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding today, the people of India salute a man of indomitable spirit, who holds firmly that all men are equal in the family of man”.

This first international award encouraged many other countries and institutions to honour Mr. Mandela, as a symbol of the liberation struggle. Many other honours were bestowed by India on Mandela in prison, such as the naming of a street in New Delhi after him. Such honours became an important part of the campaign for the release of Mandela and other political prisoners in South Africa and for the liberation of the country.

Indira Gandhi told the African Students Association in New Delhi on 11 January 1982:

“... we regard Nelson Mandela as one of the foremost proponents of freedom-freedom of man. We regard him also as a friend of India. We admire him. We have honoured him as one of our own heroes and our thoughts are often with him and his family...”

The observance of the seventieth birthday of Nelson Mandela in 1988 was more impressive in India than in any other country - except for Britain where the observance was international - with a series of events involving the participation of members of Government and Parliament, musicians, artists, sportsmen, students and others.

The Final Phase of the Struggle and the Transition

By 1985, the apartheid regime was in a crisis. It declared a State of Emergency and greatly accelerated repression. On the other hand, the resistance of the people became more widespread and determined than ever before. The movement for sanctions began to make progress in the international community as public opinion even in Western countries was outraged.

With the frontline States devastated by South African aggression and the Organisation of African Unity in difficulties, it became necessary for India to

assume a more dynamic and leading role. As noted earlier, Rajiv Gandhi, then Prime Minister, pressed for action in the Commonwealth and secured the establishment of the AFRICA Fund of the Non-Aligned Movement. India boycotted the Commonwealth Games in 1986 in protest against continued British collaboration with South Africa. With Rajiv Gandhi's encouragement, an all-party parliamentary committee for action against apartheid was set up to underline India's solidarity and to promote action by Parliaments in other countries. A World Youth Conference against Apartheid was organised by the Indian Youth Congress in Delhi. The Conference was followed by a number of actions in support of the South African liberation movement.

The unbanning of the liberatory organisations and the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990 were greeted with rejoicing in India. Mr. V.P. Singh, then Prime Minister, sent an envoy to meet Mr. Mandela and convey an invitation to him.

Mr. Mandela's visit to India in October 1990 was a memorable event in Indian-South African relations. The guest was treated as a Head of State, and was bestowed the *Bharat Ratna*, the highest award of the country meant for national heroes. The Government gave him a check for \$5 million and offered 20 million rupees in material assistance to ANC. At the conclusion of the visit, Mr. Mandela said that he had received "love, affection and material support", and that he was returning to South Africa "with a feeling that I was at home."

The visit provided an opportunity for discussions on means to secure the establishment of a non-racial democratic State in South Africa. India expressed full support to the ANC position that international sanctions against South Africa should be maintained until irreversible steps were taken for the dismantlement of apartheid.

While many countries were rushing to establish links with South Africa, though still under minority rule, India stood firm in its commitment and persuaded other countries to harmonise their actions with the views of the liberation movement. Meanwhile, India greatly increased its educational assistance to South Africans nominated by the ANC, including training in administration and management, diplomacy and defence to facilitate a democratic society.

More than Solidarity

India has often been commended for its steadfast support to the liberation struggle in South Africa by the liberation movement, as well as by international bodies.

Nelson Mandela, in a letter smuggled out of prison in 1980, paid a handsome tribute to India for "the encouragement, the inspiration and the practical assistance" it provided to the South African liberation movement.

Successive Chairmen of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid

visited India to express appreciation for India's support to the struggle against apartheid and to consult on further international action. The Committee held a special meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on October 3, 1976, to pay tribute to India on the 30th anniversary of India's initiative in bringing South African racism to the attention of the United Nations. In 1978, during the International Anti-Apartheid Year, the United Nations bestowed a posthumous award on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for his outstanding contribution in solidarity with the struggle in South Africa.

But India regarded its support to the South African liberation struggle as no more than a discharge of its duty. Indian leaders from Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stressed that it was a continuation of India's own struggle for freedom. The support was, therefore, extended in the darkest days for the South African people, and despite the pressures from the allies of apartheid, with no thought of recompense except the goodwill and friendship of the South African people.

Having gone through a long struggle for liberation from the most powerful imperialist Power, India appreciated the struggle for freedom in South Africa. It showed understanding when the liberation movement felt obliged to abandon its strict adherence to non-violence. It treated the leaders of the liberation movement as honoured guests, and true representatives of the country, rather than petitioners.

India's support to South Africa has not been merely an act of solidarity to help the people of South Africa: it was part of an effort to end colonialism and secure a new and just world order. That was why there was no trace of patronising in the relationship between the two countries, but a close identification. If India for historical reasons was able to provide concrete assistance to the South African people in their struggle for freedom, the contribution of South African people to India, though intangible, has been significant.

Underlying India's actions was a firm faith that the struggle for freedom would prevail, and a belief that free India and free South Africa would establish mutually beneficial relations. As Mr. V.K. Krishna Menon told the United Nations General Assembly in 1956:

“My Government and my people are not without hope that that vast population of ten million people, to all of whom that country belongs - it does not belong merely to those whose complexions are of one kind - will one day, however hard the road, however great the obstacles and however severe the prejudices, break the bonds that now bind them and become citizens of a civilised humanity. We hope that we shall be able to establish with them unbreakable bonds of friendship and fraternity.”

That faith was vindicated.

India and the New South Africa

India welcomed with exhilaration the historic transformation in South Africa with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the President on May 10, 1994.

Rashtrapathi Bhavan (presidential palace), Parliament and other buildings in New Delhi were illuminated as is only done for India's national day. Both houses of Parliament adopted a resolution in which they noted that 10 May was a specially auspicious day not only for South Africa and the continent of Africa, but also for the people of India and the whole world.

The two countries could now consider resumption of relations interrupted by apartheid, and means to develop fullest cooperation between governments and peoples. India aspired, as its President declared at the banquet in honour of Mr. Mandela on October 15, 1990, to convert the partnership of India and South Africa into "a model of Afro-Asian solidarity and cooperation".

Following discussions during the year, the basis for cooperation was laid during the visit of President Mandela to India as the honoured guest on Republic Day when three agreements were signed by the two countries. Of particular significance was the "Treaty on the Principles of Inter-State Relations and Cooperation between the Republic of India and the Republic of South Africa" signed by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and President Mandela on 25 January 1995. It not only recalls the traditional bonds of friendship and provides for multi-faceted cooperation, but lays down common ideals - peace, democracy and secular governance, fight against racism and religious fundamentalism, and a non-violent world free of nuclear weapons.

President Mandela foresaw a unique and special partnership between the two countries. He explained in his Rajiv Gandhi Foundation lecture on 25 January:

“...in seeking to strengthen Indo-South African relations, we do so also motivated by the need to forge a partnership whose significance should outstrip the narrow confines of our own self-interest. While we should seek to exploit one another's lucrative markets; take maximum advantage of trade and investment opportunities; expand cultural, sporting and tourist relations; cooperate on security matters, including the combating of drug trafficking, we would be less than equal to the tasks at hand if we did not realise the broader canvass with which this has to take place.

“The 'natural urge of the facts of history and geography' that Nehru spoke of, should broaden itself to include exploring the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim of socioeconomic cooperation and other peaceful endeavours; of a special relationship that should help improve the lot of the developing nations in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, Commonwealth, and Non-aligned Movement.”

While addressing the immediate task of assisting in the reconstruction and development of South Africa and developing bilateral cooperation in various fields, the two countries will need to keep in mind the wider goal of service to the sister continents of Asia and Africa, and to the world. Speaking on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the Indian Parliament on January 26, President Mandela asked:

“...it would be proper in this gathering and on this day, to ask ourselves if our shared heritage does not confer upon our two countries a special responsibility, to jointly commit ourselves to contributing to the emergence of a new world order in which democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere”.

India and South Africa, with their common heritage and ideals, as well as human and material resources, can make a great contribution to the progress of the sister continents of Asia and Africa and to genuine international cooperation.