



**An address
by
the President of Iceland
Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
at a State Dinner
given by
H.E. the President of India
Pratibha Patil
Delhi
14 January 2010**

Madame President
Vice President
Prime Minister
Your Excellencies
Dear friends

Every journey to India is rich in excitement and colours, provides the visitor with a splendid tapestry of ancient culture and modern achievement; demonstrations of how a vibrant democracy continuously strengthens the spirit of creation.

My life has been blessed by earlier encounters with this great nation, by the friendship granted through shared endeavours, by the vision which has inspired so many of your leaders.

Tonight I thank you, Madame President, for the honour You and the people of India have bestowed upon my country by inviting me on this State Visit, thus confirming our partnership in the quest for democracy and human progress, for peace and responsible guardianship of Planet Earth.

It became the privilege of my Presidency to bring our nations closer together, thereby fulfilling a dream created in a dialogue with Indira and Rajiv Gandhi more than a quarter of a century ago and strengthened through visionary cooperation with many others who not only served the villages of India but also towered on the world stage.

Thus, in recent years, the diplomatic dialogue between India and Iceland has become firmly rooted in the services of our new embassies and particularly reinforced by the excellent contributions made by Your first Ambassador to Iceland.

Our scientists and scholars, engineers and technicians have demonstrated how partnership in green energy can make Iceland's experience available so as to further such progress in India.

The rich research data which have deepened our knowledge of the glaciers in Iceland, of the Greenland ice-sheet and the Arctic, can also, through extensive cooperation and the training of young Indian experts, help to monitor developments in the Himalayas and their impact on water resources, soil and food production.

The health of our peoples, indeed of all nations, has been improved through an Indian-Icelandic cooperation in pharmaceutical research and production and through new advances in prosthetics which enable many poor and unfortunate people who have lost a leg to walk, and even run, again.

Now, through the lenses of your burgeoning film industry, the people of India can enjoy the landscapes of Iceland: the geysers, the volcanoes, the glaciers, the rivers and the lakes, the black deserts and the green valleys – they can observe celebrities of the silver screen perform on sets formed by natural wonders in the youngest country on earth; thus encouraging more of Your citizens to enjoy the hospitality provided by the descendants of the brave voyagers who settled in Iceland twelve hundred years ago, some decades after Islam was first brought to India.

Our universities and institutions of research and learning are working ever closer together and in recent years, participation in the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit has enriched my understanding of the most profound challenges facing our times.

Our common journey is indeed inspired by the ideals of democracy and freedom: India the largest democracy on earth; Iceland the oldest due to our parliament being established nearly 1100 years on the rift zone between the tectonic plates of America and Europe.

Our shared democratic mission is the foundation of our friendship and common endeavours, brings us together in the halls where the world assembles.

It is a profound honour to be received here tonight by Your Excellency, Madame President, and I ask all of you to raise your glasses

to salute the people of India and the promising future of this great and fascinating country.