

**Ambassador's Statement at India Diwali Festival
in Amstelveen on Saturday, 30th October 2010**

Excellency, Mayor of Amstelveen, Deputy Mayor and the great Organising Team as well as the Mehra Family, all of whom have given their services to this Festival on a voluntary basis.

Thank you for inviting me to this Diwali Festival today. Diwali has truly become an international event including here in the Netherlands. The presence of the Mayor of Amstelveen His Excellency Mr. J.H.C. van Zanen is symbolic of the support given by our Dutch friends to celebrate our age-long cultural traditions here in a true mingling of East and West. When I met His Excellency, the Mayor on my first visit to Amstelveen at an event hosted by one of the members of the organising team Mr. Rajiv Mehra, he underlined the sterling contribution of the Indian community here in Amstelveen. This indeed is a matter of pride for both India and the Netherlands.

2. No one can forget the famous line from Othello when he said:

"Put out the light and then put out the light"

My favourite of course is by Dylan Thomas:

"Go not gently into the good night,
Rage, rage against the fading of the light"
i.e. do not take your destiny as darkness for granted.

Diwali provides this light, the eternal light required by humankind to meet its destiny. Rabindranath Tagore had said for Diwali and I quote,

"The night is black,
kindle the lamp of love
with thy light and devotion".

3. My Dutch friends have informed me that Diwali is commemorated here with members of the community in the traditional way with the lighting of the earthen lamps. The origin of Diwali is a return of the exiled King Ram to his kingdom of Ayodhya after defeating the demon king Ravan in one of the greatest epics, the Ramayan, written between 2250 to 1250 B.C. Perhaps its most significant meaning is the awareness of the inner light which for all human

beings is the beauty of the soul. Diwali is the celebration of this inner light within us, from which flows universal compassion, love, joy and peace, so important in today's troubled world.

4. We always celebrate Diwali with lights, fireworks and sweets and we will do the same here today. I look forward to being with you all here in the presence of the Mayor & see the fireworks display. Back home Diwali is accompanied by different Pujas - Lakshmi Puja in some parts of India and Kali Puja in my home state in Bengal. All these Pujas demonstrate that good must prevail over evil.

5. For Indian business and industry, Diwali also symbolises the true entrepreneurial spirit of India, the pursuit of wealth and prosperity. Accounts are closed on this day all over India and reopened the next day. So for those of you in business here this is another opportunity to reaffirm your commitment to search for prosperity, wealth, happiness and sustainable development.

6. Let me conclude by quoting in English the Vedic chant in Sanskrit on Diwali. When we light a candle, we say,

"lead us from untruth to truth,
from darkness to light,
from death to immortality,
Om Shanti Om Shanti, Shanti, i.e. Peace".

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