

President Bush's Speech at the State Dinner at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Pakistan; Mr. Man Mohan Singh, Prime Minister; and all other Indians

(Whispers from an aide: Republic of India, Mr. President, not Pakistan.)

I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen, I did mean to say the Islamic Republic of India. I just couldn't remember where Air Force One was first supposed to land. I am mighty pleased to be in this great country of yours and I thank My Man Mohan for his kind invitation from the bottom of my heart. That great state of Texas where I come from is really heart county, we've got very big hearts, and I believe that some of your country's great politicians have come down there to get their hearts fixed. Now my predecessor Bill Clinton -- God bless him, his family and ours are getting cosier and cosier by the day, though I do wonder if I'll ever be able to hold Hilary to my bosom -- so my predecessor, on coming to your great country some years ago, said that it had always been his childhood dream to visit India. Now I have to admit that I never had any such childhood dream. It's not that I didn't have a childhood, indeed I know that some people think I never ceased being a child. And I do dream -- that great American, King's his name, said you should dream from the mountain-top. And like King, I believe in big dreams. I never had the kind of dream that Bill Clinton did because, and I'm not ashamed to admit it, I never heard of India when I was a child. You know they say that old habits die hard, and I never did leave behind the habit of not reading books. You all know that I don't read much of newspapers or reports, my advisers do that. That's why I'm President, you see, I don't get to read anything. But let me again thank Man Mohan Singh. I knew about the political dynasties you've had, the father-daughter, daughter-son, husband-wife, father-grandson, great great grandfather-boy teams, the Gandhis, Nehrus, and even people I'd never heard of before, the Lallus and Yadavs, but I had hadn't heard of the Mohan dynasty. I guess I should have thought of it, given that both Mohan Das Gandhi and Man Mohan Singh had some kind of turban on their head. I might not like to read much, but I sure do like picture books, and I have seen pictures of Gandhi when he wore a turban.

Condi told me all about the great country of India on the long journey on board. I mean, there's only so much sleeping that even a President can do. We in America, and especially in Texas, know a thing or two about Indians. Condi did tell me that that I shouldn't be talking of teepees, face paint, feathers, squaws, bows and arrows, Geronimo, and Sitting Bull. Some of that Indian culture has definitely left its mark on the youth of America today: I do know that the paint is on longer applied to the face, but to the hands. So I guess that's why Condi didn't want me to talk about face paint. You in India have a great civilization, but it all really began in America. Somewhere in the history book that was read to me it says that the Indians crossed over some body of water, I think it's called the Berring Curve, and that was some 10,000 years ago. That was a long time ago, and I really don't know why many people continue to say that we in America have a very short history. Now I have to admit that there aren't many Indians left in America, but most of them, you all know, died of diseases. I guess it must be genetics, since I hear that you

Indians are still dying of many diseases. But, truth be told, it's not at all a bad thing that there aren't many Indians in America. There are over a billion of you in India, and my population experts told me that every sixth person in the world is an Indian. That's awesome. Now if nature hadn't done her work in America -- God bless nature, always giving us global warmth and comfort -- the Indians in America would have multiplied as fast as you have, and every fourth person in the world would be an Indian. If you all believe in multiculturalism and diversity as much as I do, you have to agree that it's a good thing that we don't have so many Indians in America. And the ones that are here, well they are in places that we call reservations where they can't be seen. It took me some time to understand why the Indians were called an invisible minority and why they seemed kinda upset. So you see you just reserve special spots for minorities, but we being an older and more experienced democracy, we actually have a special place for them that we call reservations. Isn't that something?

As I said, it's a great honor for me to be in India, another great home of multiculturalism. This beautiful lady to my right -- well, not quite, since no one is really to my right, except perhaps Pat Robertson, Tom De Lay (and he's not part of my delegation, being on a delayed schedule) and that other Bill, Frist -- well, this elegant lady who's from Italy and I'm told is something like an invisible hand running this country (why, it seems whenever we speak of India, we run into invisible people and invisible hands) - well, she's Roman Catholic. Man Mohan Singh is Sikh, though why they call him that I sure don't know, since he seems to be in really good shape, even without going biking, fishing, golfing, and hunting. What a life one has as President! And the President of your Republic, well, I was sort of shocked to know that he's a Muslim, though Runny and Condi told me he's a Hindu kind of Muslim, whatever that means. He reads the Bhagavad Gita, does yoga, doesn't eat meat, and doesn't like violence very much. I mean, either you're a Hindu, or a Muslim; either you're with the Hindus, or with the Muslims. Since we're on the subject of Muslims, let me say what is one of the main things that brings me to this great country of yours. Somehow, you'll pardon me for saying so, when we got to talk about Muslims, we can't seem to get away from killings, and passion, and violence, and all that stuff. Now let me be very clear. I know, though I don't have any close Moslem friends, that Islam is a religion of peace, and most Moslems, like all Americans, are peace-loving people. Now I might not read, but I sure do look at the funnies every morning. Some days ago I heard about this huge fuss -- people call it a ruckus, but I believe in plain language -- over these Danish cartoons. These Danish cartoons of Muhammad have got them Muslims stirring again. In the war room at the White House, we have a large wall map of the world and all those strategic places that are of great interest to us from the standpoint of American national security are clearly marked. I don't know much about Denmark, but the White House geographer showed me this country and I couldn't really figure out how Muhammad got to Denmark. Now our Librarian of Congress who was present said something about not all being well in the state of Denmark, and when I asked him what he meant, he said it was a literary allusion to some play about a King of Denmark by that great Brit, Shakespeare. He sure did shake up the world, and that too without a spear. He only used a pen. I finally realize, while I'm talking to you, why we always got this question in school, whether the pen was mightier than the sword. I thought it was a rather daft thing to think that the pen could be mightier than the sword,

but both Shakespeare and this Danish cartoons mess makes me think that I should rethink my position. I'm not known for re-thinking anything, but God's ways are mysterious.

Everyone knows me as a very focused person, but I've been really distracted today. It must have something to do with being in India. Our Librarian of Congress, and we have a mighty fine library in Congress, not that I've ever been to it, had been speaking of literary allusions. Now I mean most of us have illusions, and in that special briefing I got on India they said that Hindus believe that the whole world is an illusion, that nothing's real. They even have a special word for it, they call it MAYA, although I always thought that was a Russian woman's name. We in America, and that must be our Indian heritage, know a thing or two about illusions too. We never did find those weapons of mass destruction, but believe me, they're not an illusion. They're there. I'd compare these weapons of mass destruction with an onion. You notice how many layers there are to an Indian? I meant an onion. You keep on peeling off layer after layer, but as you get closer to the truth, to the onion's center, your eyes start to water. I haven't peeled an onion in years, but I know that for a fact. Yes, Sir, there are ugly facts in this world, and it's a fact that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but the eyes of our inspectors started to water when they got close to discovering the truth. We never found the weapons because we threw out the baby with the bath water.

So let me return to the subject of Muslims and say some words about why I'm here today. I was told by Condi that some Muhammad fellow came to India some 1000 years ago and that you've been smarting ever since. Your neighboring country, the one you all don't get along with too well, even named one of its missiles after that place from where he came, Gas-ni or something. Mean thing to do, I'd say. So whether Mohamed is on cartoons or on missiles, I guess the trouble never ends. I know that your leaders were telling us that you had plenty of experience with Moslems, but we weren't inclined to listen to you. We've got to continue to cooperate to hunt down those terrorists of al-Qaeda. Many of them, I hear, are holed up in Pakistan. That worst snake of all -- he's a coward, won't come out in the open, bin Laden, well he just disappeared on us and has become invisible. There we go again, I hope you all now understand what I meant when I said that there's something about India and the word invisible that makes them go together. The whole point of my trip is to change that, to put India on the map. Wasn't India where they had the disappearing rope trick? I seem to remember something of that sort from the magic show I saw at the White House the day the Twin Towers slowly disappeared from the TV screen. I am convinced that the power of illusion is truly great. The War on Terror must go on, and I know that the partnership of our two great countries will be a model for the rest of the world. Think of all the ways in which we complement each other: you greet us with folded hands, we stretch out our hands in a firm (well, mostly firm, except for the kind of guys you see in "Heartbreak Mountain") handshake; you venerate the cow, we love to eat it; your guys are up while we're asleep; you think with your brain, we think with our bodies.

Our two great countries are on the verge of a special relationship. Thanks to the Brits, we speak the same language. Funny thing, that special report I got on your country had a little history lesson, and it said that a general called Cornwallis from Cornwall who was

defeated soundly by our General Washington then went on to India. They wanted a man of experience to spread democracy around the world. Well, we're both democracies now. You have a President, and so do we -- that's me. People who've been studying this kind of thing, you know democracies around the world -- and they're increasing, just look at Iraq, look at those turbaned Afghan women so eager to vote, and freedom's on the march -- say that the big difference is that your President is actually a figurehead. Many of my critics have said that I'm a figurehead as well and for once my critics are right. They were wrong about WMD, they were wrong about whether those Arabs would take to democracy like fish to oil, and they've been wrong about doggone everything else, except for one thing. It really is Dickhead Cheney who's running my government, and he did a very good job of it largely cause we kept him in hiding, just like Bill Laden. My Dick is really good at nearly everything -- he gets the contracts to the right people, wears a pacemaker -- you know, I'm a great believer in going at the pace that our Maker set for me, in bed by nine o'clock sharp -- and even knows how to fire a gun. I'm sure you've all heard of this expression, Lame Duck President, but it goes to show that our reporters do not always adhere to the high standards that we expect of them. Dick's always had a preference for quail, not ducks. I never did think of it before, but I wonder what happened to that other Quail, you know the guy who was Dick's earlier incarnation under Ronnie?

Well, your excellencies and friends, I think I've gone on long enough. We've got lot of important issues to talk about over the next two days of my visit, and that's why I brought along my entire team. God bless you all.