



OPENING REMARKS AT THE FESTIVAL OF CHARIOTS
Delivered by Her Worship - Cllr Zandile Gumede, Mayor of
eThekweni Municipality

Council General of India,

Governing Body Commission of ISKCON,

ISKCON leader, His Holiness, Indradyumna Swami

All Protocol Observed,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Sanibonani,

Nityananda! Gauranga! Hare Krishna!

Let me take this opportunity on behalf of the city, Gumede and Majola family and the ANC in eThekweni that I lead – and wish all of you a happy Easter holidays and religious devotees a wonderful Easter weekend.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, universally known as the Hare Krishna Movement. This

movement is one which brings together people of all walks of life, in an effort to magnify the spirit of sharing and experiencing of each other's cultures, therefore initiating a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the country.

Programme director,

EThekweni Municipality has a vision to be the most livable and caring city by 2030 and Durban so happens to be home to some of the most beautiful places in the world. And the Hare Krishna Temple of understanding is one of the largest in the southern hemisphere, drawing in worshippers and travelers from all over together, programme director, diversity does indeed make the world go round.

It is indeed a blessing that Durban is hosting the 29th Festival of Chariots which is said to be the biggest outside India, under the guidance of ISKCON'S leader, His Holiness Indradyumna Swami.

EThekweni Municipality provides a warm setting where diverse views, values and perspectives are warmly accepted. Durban is filled with people from different cultures, and in fact we are ethnically diverse and exude a cultural richness not only of food but of different beliefs and traditions, you choose where you belong. So as the celebrations continue these next four days, I am sure everyone will be well accommodated.

However, we believe that we are on the right path, as the international Mercer quality of living survey recently named our Municipality the best South African City to live in for a third consecutive year. If you are living in Durban you must know that this is one of the world respected cities. We are on the right path and we believe that we can improve and do much better. Working together we can do more and move Durban forward.

Programme Director,

Durban has the biggest surprise for our precious visitors who are coming for their Easter break, they must brace themselves for a time of their lives. We have put together a number of activities that will make these holidays memorable.

We want to use these Easter holidays to rest and reflect. We need this time to reflect on the importance of the Lord and our purpose in this life which is far greater than we can see. We need to reflect if we are still on the right path so that we can change our ways before it is too late. We must give thanks to the Creator for giving us an opportunity to live. We must be thankful of our children and families.

Therefore let us give thanks and solitude regardless of your religion and beliefs, let us celebrate the Easter holidays as each and one of us sees fit, and take the time to reflect on what is most important.

Programme Director,

The month of April is one of the important months in our calendar as South Africans. It is the month that we received freedom by being able to vote for the peoples government of choice led by President Mandela. We need to take time and reflect how we changed the lives of our people. As the ANC, we realize how have been able to stabilize democracy by setting up independent judiciary, free media and having chapter nine institution. We have bill of rights and all the freedoms. We have also tried to cushion the poor through our socialist programme. We have free education, social grants, bursaries, EPWP and other forms of social security.

As we move forward we are saying we want radical economic transformation. We want an economy that will accommodate our African people who were oppressed. We want economic growth and stability that will benefit the masses. We want change and change for the better. Our

freedom is meaningless without jobs and economic opportunities. Our freedom is meaningless if the majority of the economy is still in the hands of the few males.

We also have a challenge of social ills such as alcohol abuse, rape, drugs, crime and violence that we are seeing on our television. In Durban we are worried by increasing number of youth who are using drugs including young girls.

We must declare our streets as drug and crime free. We must reclaim our streets from criminals and drug lords who are killing our children and the future of our country.

As we celebrate the month of Freedom, we also want to see our children being freed from the drugs. We want a drug free generation. We want to see these children leaving our streets and being reunited with their families. We need a comprehensive strategy that will see these kids being rehabilitated and united with society.

Programme Director,

In closing, we are very grateful to be invited to be part of tonight's occasion. As a new Mayor am willing to create better working relations with you. We need to hold hands together. You are doing a wonderful job for our community and if we work together we can even do better. I want to work closely with you. Please be in touch with my office even if I am not present but you will be assisted. I am also the chairperson of the ANC in eThekweni and we want to have more discussions with you. We don't have to talk when we only have elections. I invite you to come to my office and let us engage.

As we will be celebrating the Family Day holiday on Monday, may you all feel the bright joyful blessings that the Almighty has to offer you these holidays, and may it bring all the families happiness, health and lots of love.

Allow me to leave you with these words, **“There is nothing that love cannot transform. Accommodate people and see they will be transformed”**

Let us love one another.

-I thank you.