

World Sanskrit Day

Uppsala
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Remarks

Ambassador Tanmaya Lal

Ms. Kerstin Forss *Vårdsätra & Gutasunds hembygdsförening*
Ms. Ramaji Bhikhabhai
Prof Wessler

Thank you all for joining us this morning,

It is great to welcome you right at this special place in Uppsala where we have this wonderful thread of **SwedenIndiaSambandh**.

This is a remarkable **inscription** in one of the oldest languages of the world - Sanskrit from an ancient Indian epic Mahabharata - done 200 years ago on a rock in Sweden by a then young Swedish scholar, who later had a leading role in initiating Indology studies in Sweden. *Sometimes this rock inscription reminds me of the **Runestone** tradition.* That he chose an ancient Sanskrit verse for his fiancé in 1830s is even more remarkable.

We thought of meeting here today as every year 31 August is celebrated as the **World Sanskrit Day**.

Also, this year marks **75 years** of diplomatic relations between India and Sweden. Our ties, of course, go much further back in time.

Swedish companies like **Ericsson** and SKF have been present in India for more than 100 years. Rabindranath **Tagore** was awarded Nobel Prize in 1913 and he visited Uppsala in 1921 more than 100 years ago. Around that time, two Indian **revolutionaries** based themselves in Sweden after First World War to lobby for India's independence! Swedish **engineers** have worked in India in 1860s. A Swedish artist did **paintings** on India in 1850s. Swedish **East India company** ships sailed 300 years ago for India and further east for trade. A small bronze statuette of Buddha, more than a thousand years old, was recovered from an excavation of a Viking settlement in **Helgö**. There is a Swedish postage stamp on that ! And so on ...

Indology studies at Uppsala University are an important part of these links reflecting an early attempt to understand a civilization, thousands of km away.

Prof Tullberg played a leading role in these efforts in Sweden in 1830s. He became a keen scholar of Sanskrit at a time when Europe was beginning to discover ancient Indian culture, languages, philosophy and civilizational heritage. Study of ancient Sanskrit scriptures marked an early phase of Indology studies in the West.

Sanskrit has been a vehicle of a vast and varied literature - from epics and poetry - to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religious and philosophical texts, and scientific treatises on everything - from mathematics & astronomy and medicine to law and linguistics, music and dance.

The concepts of Zero or **Shunya** or of **Yoga** and **Ayurveda**, all derive from texts written in Sanskrit.

The landmark Sanskrit grammar of **Panini** dates back to 2,500 years. It remains a classic as knowledge was considered a function of language. Various schools of philosophy also debated language and the world it described.

Universities in **Nalanda** and **Takshshila** became international centres of learning, including of Sanskrit around 1,500 years ago.

Sanskrit travelled east to Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia and north to Tibet.

At the same time, there are intriguing similarities in root words in Sanskrit and **Baltic** languages of Lithuanian and Latvian. *There are even similarities in ancient **deities** in India and Scandinavia.*

Bharat, the name of our country comes from Sanskrit. In 21st century, India's moon mission is called **Chandrayaan** - comprising two Sanskrit words - meaning Moon and journey or craft.

In a recent Hollywood movie, **Oppenheimer** is shown reading Sanskrit and quoting Gita, an ancient Sanskrit scripture. Leading quantum physicists of the time - Schrödinger, Neils Bohr, Heisenberg, Einstein - were all familiar with these ancient Indian Sanskrit texts and concepts that have striking resonance with complex and often counter intuitive discoveries and predictions of quantum physics.

Many scholars believe that the highly precise **grammar** of Sanskrit, which is rule and formula-bound and logical, is the most appropriate to write algorithms, or to be used in **machine learning** and even **artificial intelligence**.

The 18th World Sanskrit **Conference** was held in Australia in January this year.

Today several leading **universities** across US, Europe, Australia, Japan have departments for Sanskrit and Indology studies.

We are joined by **Prof Wessler**, an Indology scholar from the prestigious Uppsala University.

In conclusion may I say that India Sweden friendship is flourishing. It is wonderful to see such beautiful threads of our ties or **Sambandh**, a word that has a similar meaning in both Swedish and Sanskrit.

In fact, the Swedish Embassy in Delhi has been using #SwedenIndiaSamband as a **hashtag** on social media, which we also like and use.

At our Embassy in Stockholm, we have created a special gallery of images about longstanding India Sweden ties and we have named it as the **Sambandh gallery**. The gallery also shows pictures of Prof Otto Tullberg and other Swedish Indologists and of course this rock with Sanskrit inscription!

As we celebrate these contacts between our cultures and peoples, may I once again complement Ms. Kerstin, Ms. Ramaji and all their friends and colleagues who have contributed to restoring and conserving this **collective heritage** of ours - that is **etched in stone!**

Thank you for joining today.