

**Ambassador's Remarks on the occasion of Launch of Year Long  
Celebrations of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Visit of Gurudev  
Rabindranath Tagore to Japan, May 11, 2024**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Children,

A very Good Afternoon to all of you and Greetings on the birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, our National Poet. We are also launching the yearlong celebrations by Vivekananda Cultural Center to mark the hundredth anniversary of his second visit to Japan in 1924.

I am so happy to welcome you all who have joined us today when we remember and pay homage to one of the greatest sons of India, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

Dear Friends,

Today, when India is undertaking a journey of Amrti Kaal, a journey towards India @ 100 years of our Independence in 2047, cultural diplomacy has assumed greater importance as we seek to strengthen and reinforce people-to-people connect all across the globe transcending political boundaries.

India's culture and traditions go back to the dawn of time. It is distinguished by antiquity, continuity, refinement, diversity and an ability to assimilate the best from outside without losing its own inherent character, authenticity and civilizational ethos of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam. Gurudev Tagore was an embodiment of this civilisational ethos of India.

Let me quote Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji when she spoke about Gurudev Tagore. She said and I quote: As a globally respected sage who combined the best of ancient Indian ethos with the modern streams of rationalism and humanism, Gurudev saw India as the

leading source of knowledge for the world. He had described this pioneering role of India in 'Geet-Vitaan' in the following words:

'Your horizon had seen the first dawn,

Your hermitage had echoed the first chant.

Your exotic abode had been the first paradise -

Spreading the fragrance of knowledge as poem and song' Unquote,

Dear Friends,

It is this civilizational and cultural ethos of India that we endeavour to spread in our engagement with Japan by holding regular events with the support and participation of our vibrant Indian diaspora in Japan and our many Japanese friends. We all here some say, India is too far. It is not too far. India and Japan are neighbors; we are civilizational neighbors. If Gurudev Tagore could visit Japan hundred years ago, when the travel was so much more difficult, how can we say that India is far. He visited Japan, not once but thrice.

Dear Friends,

Any part of this beautiful country we travel we see an India connect. India is the land where Buddhism was born and spread across the globe including to Japan. India's earliest documented direct contact with Japan was with the Todaiji Temple in Nara, where the consecration or eye-opening of the statue of Lord Buddha was performed by an Indian monk, Bodhisena, in 752 AD. Of course Buddhism came to Japan much before that. We have Mahakal, so there is Daikokuten in Japan. Saraswati (Benzaiten), is the most revered deity in Japan, after the Buddha. We have Brahma, we have Bonten in Japan. Our Mahadevi is Lakshmi, so there are Kichijoten in

Japan. So, we have Ganesha and Japan has Kangiten (Shoden). These are connections that we need to celebrate every day. \_In Japanese India is Land of Heaven (Tanjiku). There is the tradition of Zen in Japan, and we have meditation as a medium of action with the soul.

Dear Friends,

It is this civilizational connect that we reinforce when we celebrate the birth anniversary of Gurudev Tagore in Japan and the hundredth anniversary of his travel to Japan. Today, as we pay homage to Gurudev Tagore, let me quote Hon'ble Prime Minister who had said about Gurudev Tagore earlier, I quote: "I bow to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore on his birth anniversary. His prose and poetry have influenced generations. He represents the best of modern and ancient Indian intellectual thought. Gurudev Tagore blended the wisdom of India's past with the promise of its future through his literature, art and music. He taught us the power of free thinking while inspiring us to dream of a 'Heaven of Freedom' where the mind is without fear and the head can be held high. We proudly remember Gurudev Tagore's immense contribution in the making of our nation". Unquote.

Every major work of Tagore – his poems and songs, novels, short stories and dramas – were imbued with the dominating idea of transcending the narrow for a greater, all-embracing, human and humane ideal. It was this realization – that narrow, local, national and regional differences are to be sublimated in the search for eternal values, that led Gurudev to create Visvabharati – the 'India of the World' or the 'Universal India'. In the process he transformed himself from being Bengal's 'Kabiguru' to 'Visvakabi' – the poet of the world.

Gurudev's eternal words of wisdom will continue to inspire generations to come. "Where the mind is without fear, and the head is held high, Where knowledge is free, Where the world has not been

broken, up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; Where words come out from the depths of truth; Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection....” I can go on and on with his inspiring verses.

Dear Friends,

I am happy that VCC has come up with a year long celebrations in 2024 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of visit of Gurudev Tagore to Japan. Director, VCC has personally prepared a yearlong action plan spreading all across Japan to commemorate this anniversary year. Today, I have the great honour of inaugurating this year long program in your presence.

As I look back in my over one year of stay in Japan, I can recall with utmost happiness that no week here has passed without a grand celebration of India being held in Japan. I thank the many members of the Indian diaspora and Japanese friends who joined hands with us to celebrate India in Japan, almost every day. In coming weeks and months, we will continue our efforts to celebrate India every day in Japan and to build upon on our civilizational and cultural connect and our business and people to people engagement to contribute to our journey towards a Viksit Bharat.

Dear Friends,

I congratulate our artists and many children who are joining us today to perform on this stage. I also congratulate those who regularly participate in our weekly India quiz that VCC organizes. I once again thank you for joining us today to celebrate the birth anniversary of Gurudev Tagore and the inauguration of the Yearlong celebrations by VCC.

Thank you.

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