

## 400 years of Luleå

21 August 2021

Luleå

### Remarks

**Ambassador Tanmaya Lal**

Hon'ble **Deputy Mayor Fredrik Hansson**,

Ms. Karina Jarett

Guests,

First of all, may I thank the **Indian Association of Luleå** for organizing this special event and for inviting me to join all of you today in this beautiful city.

It is a very special occasion as it celebrates an independent **India at 75 years** and the four centuries of Luleå in Sweden.

My best wishes to all the residents of Luleå celebrating the **glorious 400 years** of this city.

Friends,

**In some ways, India Sweden contacts go back more than a few centuries.**

Beads and crystals from India have been found in the Viking settlements in **Birka**.

In **Helgö**, a 1,500 years old bronze statuette of Buddha from India was found.

These offer astonishing glimpses into the **ancient long distance trading networks**.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a **Swedish East India Trading Company** was setup.

Swedish scholars started **Indology studies in late 18<sup>th</sup> century**. **Uppsala and Lund** became two important centres for Sanskrit and Indian studies.

In 1913 Rabindranath **Tagore** became the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize.

It was also the time when **Swedish companies** such as Ericsson and Atlas Copco started their operations in India. Now there are around 250 Swedish companies active there.

There are ties in every field.

Four Indians have received the prestigious **Stockholm Water Prize**.

Mrs. **Lilavati** Devi Häger, a renowned Indian artiste settled in Sweden and became India's dance ambassador. She was awarded by H.M. The King.

**Pandit Ravi Shankar** was awarded music's most prestigious global award - the Polar Prize in Sweden in 1998.

There have also been many memorable **sporting encounters**.

For instance, **Bjorn Borg and Vijay Amritraj**, Ramesh Krishnan and Stefan Edberg, or Ramesh Krishnan and Mats Wilander. India and Sweden met in **1987 Davis Cup final** in Gothenburg.

The legendary **Prakash Padukone** won the 1980 Swedish Open Badminton in Karlskrona.

Sweden's Felix Rosenqvist drove Mahindra Racing to its first victory in **Formula E** in Berlin four years ago.

The young Swedish wrestler **Sofia Mattson** was part of Pro-Wrestling League in India. The Swedish Football star **Freddy Ljungberg** played in the Indian Super League. India's women chess stars Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli have played **Pia Cramlin**.

India's golfing star Aditi Ashok has trained with **Annika Sorenstam** Foundation.

India's Women Football team is being coached by **Thomas Dannerby** from Sweden.

At the **Tokyo** Olympics, Indian and Swedish women players met in table tennis and wrestling.

And the sensational **Neeraj Chopra**, who won India's first Olympic Gold medal in athletics did his final training in Uppsala.

Friends,

Based on the media coverage about India here, it might appear that India is only beset with huge problems.

**India does face huge challenges. But has made tremendous progress as well.**

Some context can help.

India is among the **oldest civilizations**. And the most **diverse**. Several world **faiths** have their origin in India. There are more than 20 major **languages**.

India represents **one-sixth of entire humanity** ! 1.3 billion people.  
Nearly **50 Indian cities** have a population of more than one million each  
and **three** have more than 10 million each.

India's area is of the **size of the European Union**.

75 years ago in 1947, India became independent after a **long hard struggle and at a huge cost**. India was partitioned. Massive forced migration followed.

There has been a complete turnaround since then.

Today India is world's **fifth largest economy with a GDP of nearly 3 trillion dollars** and is growing fast.

India is a **spacefaring** nation. India has research stations at **Antarctic, Arctic and Himalayas**. India manufactures **supercomputers to fighter aircraft to aircraft carriers**.

India is a **major development partner** - building roads, dams, metros, power transmission lines and more. India is also among the **first responders for humanitarian emergencies** in the Indian Ocean region. Indian **affordable vaccines and generic drugs** are lifeline for many developing countries.

Indian **agriculture** scientists provided solutions to feed the large population and surplus for exports. India built its capacities for **industrial production** for instance steel, cement, chemicals, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals.

United Nations has acknowledged the large strides that India has made in **tackling extreme poverty**, **Digital technology** is being effectively deployed to scale up interventions to fast-track development. Today there is a huge growing prosperous middle class in India.

Airports to railway coaches are now being run on **solar power**. The Delhi Metro runs on solar power generated around 1000 km away.

India is the only **G20 country** on track to meet its Paris commitments on Climate Action.

More than **500 million Covid vaccine doses** have been administered in India so far !

India is the first country whose spacecraft reached **Mars** orbit in its first attempt ! Under a team of scientists and engineers led by **women**. A manned space mission is now being prepared.

**President, Prime Minister, Speaker** - women, **UN Police Peacekeeping**

Today India has the highest percentage of **women commercial pilots**. And young Indian **women athletes** compete in Olympics in sports such as **fencing, sailing and gymnastics**.

All this development has been achieved within an **inclusive democratic framework**. With regular elections. There were over **900 million eligible voters** in our last election !

Friends,

**Despite the Covid pandemic situation, the India Sweden engagement has continued to intensify. Our Prime Ministers and other ministers have held online discussions.**

**Many Indian companies are now manufacturing in Sweden.** Companies like Bharat Forge, Kalpataru Power Transmission, Birla group in fabrics, C&G Drives & Automation, Wipro. Then there are IT companies like TCS, HCL, Mahindra Tech, Infosys and Wipro.

Friends,

We hope to bring India and Sweden even closer. **We need to overcome simple stereotypes and know each other more fully.**

**The Indians in Sweden represent India's diversity, the spirit to live in harmony, qualities of hard work and professionalism. They represent Indian heritage and the dynamism.**

My best wishes to all of you.

Thank you.