

Inauguration of India Collection
Art Museum Riga Bourse
13 January 2023
Riga

Remarks by Ambassador
Tanmaya Lal

- State Secretary Andris Pelšs
Director, Art Museum Riga Bourse, Ms. Daiga Upeniece,
Dr. Sigma Ankrava
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests and friends,
- This is a wonderful start to the new year as we meet at this beautiful and prestigious museum in the heart of Riga this evening.
- We are grateful to Ms. Daiga and her colleagues, especially Ms. Kristīne Milere, for hosting this exhibition of the Indian Collection and thank the Museum authorities for this opportunity to collaborate.
- We were here last March, and it is remarkable to see the project already completed. I understand that this will be the largest such collection in the Baltics.
- It is also great to have the eminent scholar Dr. Sigma Ankrava releasing her Latvian translation of the ancient Indian epic Ramayana.
- Ramayana is an integral aspect of the Indian civilizational heritage.
- The story of Lord Rama has continued to capture the imagination of and inspire hundreds of millions of people through millennia not only in India but outside also. It remains a source of moral and spiritual guidance.
- It is believed to have been composed by sage Valmiki in Sanskrit language around 2,500 years ago and encapsulates the essence of Vedas, Upanishads and other texts.
- Ramayana, through the life story of Lord Rama, brings out themes that societies experience in any age, and which remain of abiding and contemporary interest and relevance.

- These timeless themes relate to duty, ethics, justice, moral dilemmas, the constant change and diversity, and the importance of balance and equanimity in the face of extreme adversity and challenges.
- Ramayana is also part of Buddhist and Jain religious texts.
- Through centuries, there have also been many retellings of Ramayana by authors and poets from different regions.
- Ramayana travelled with merchants to India's neighbourhood. In the north towards China; in the east towards Myanmar, Thailand, Laos & Cambodia; and in the south towards Java and Sumatra.
- Ramayana became ingrained in culture, art and architecture in all these societies.
- On Bali islands in Indonesia, the Muslim community presents wonderful dance dramas from Ramayana, as do artistes in Thailand or Cambodia, Vietnam and Mongolia. The Thai King till today takes the title of Rama.
- It is wonderful to see Ramayana being published in Latvian language. Many congratulations to Dr. Ankrava on this landmark achievement that will become another bridge between our countries.
- Sanskrit and Latvian languages retain many intriguing similarities that go back deep in time.
- For instance, the first thing that I noticed during my visit to the remarkable Riga Motor Museum was the description of an ancient cart or chariot, called Rati in Latvian. It is called Rath in Sanskrit and Hindi.
- These common roots are fascinating and enduring cultural links despite the vast geographical distance, which at one time used to be bridged by the amber trade route.
- A detailed scholarly study on these shared roots in Sanskrit and Latvian languages will be of great interest.
- In these times of increasing globalisation and interdependence, but also of persisting stereotypes, a greater mutual awareness among societies is essential.

- That's where cultural linkages and people to people contacts become very important and cannot be seen in isolation.
- The items included in the exhibition here provide a brief glimpse into the culture and history of India and its peoples from certain periods and geographies.
- These objects are both utilitarian but also fine examples of art and creativity and skills of those who made it and the aesthetics of that time.
- The collection includes samples of textiles and clothing and other art objects of metal.
- Some of these items take us back to the time when India was the leading economy in the world, and was long known for its textiles, metallurgy, spices, steel and ship building, but also mathematics and surgery.
- Many of the faiths that originated in India, for instance, Hinduism and Buddhism, travelled across the Indian Ocean and the Silk Roads to other peoples. Ancient Indian practices of Yoga and the holistic healing of Ayurveda also reached other continents.
- Colonialism devastated India's economy and subjugated Indian people. A largely peaceful mass freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi led India to independence. We deeply appreciate that a bust of Mahatma Gandhi was installed at the iconic National Library in Riga three years ago.
- Freedom came at a huge cost with a traumatic partition of the country.
- Today 75 years after independence, India has bounced back to become the world's fifth largest economy and is growing fast.
- India works closely with partner countries on a series of global challenges.
- India today is helping build roads, dams, irrigation, metros, power transmission lines, schools & hospitals in a number of partner countries from Afghanistan to Kenya to Mauritius.
- Affordable vaccines and generic drugs made in India are lifeline in many developing countries. India is among the first responders in humanitarian emergencies in the Indian Ocean region.
- At a time of disruption of global food supply chains, India is providing food grains to people of a number of countries.

- Indian scientists today work at their research stations in Arctic, Antarctic and Himalaya, contributing to the global research.
- After the remarkable success of IT industry, digital transformation is now rapidly scaling up transformation.
- Today India has the third largest startup ecosystem with more than 100 unicorns already.
- Airports to Metros are now being run on solar power.
- 10 years ago, India became the first nation whose spacecraft reached Mars orbit in its first attempt! Today Space startups are launching rockets.
- All this transformation is being achieved within an inclusive and open democratic framework in a mega diverse society of 1.3 billion people who represent one sixth of humanity.

Distinguished Guests,

- We greatly value our friendship with Latvia.
- The recent visit of State Secretary Andris Pelšs to India resumed the high-level in-person exchanges after the pandemic constraints.
- We are now looking forward to an intensification of our partnership going forward with a diversification of business and technology linkages, including in IT and other niche technology areas.
- May I once again express our gratitude to the authorities at the Art Museum Riga Bourse and all the Latvian friends for supporting these endeavours to deepen people to people contacts and friendship.
- We thank you all for joining this evening.
- Our best wishes to all of you.

Thank you.