

Ambassador's Speech at the 77th Foundation Day of the ICCR

Namaste!

Distinguished guests, ICCR Alumni, friends of India, and dear friends!

It is a great pleasure and honour to welcome you all today as we celebrate the 77th Foundation Day of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Culture has always served as a powerful bridge that transcends borders and connects people across nations. India's civilizational ethos is rooted in the philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* — the world is one family. Culture remains one of the most profound ways through which we connect with this global family. In this spirit, the ICCR continues to uphold its guiding vision of "Connecting Through Culture."

Today, we observe this guiding vision against the backdrop of a remarkably dynamic era for our nation. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is not only making great strides in its economic and developmental journey but is also witnessing a profound cultural renaissance. There is a growing, undeniable interest across the world in the many facets of Indian culture. From the holistic healing sciences of Ayurveda and the universal embrace of Yoga, to the captivating storytelling of Indian films and the rich, diverse flavours of Indian food, the global community is engaging with India's heritage more deeply than ever before.

Since its inception on 9 April 1950, ICCR, headquartered in New Delhi, has played a pivotal role in advancing India's cultural diplomacy worldwide. In pursuing its mandate, ICCR operates through a network of 11 Zonal Offices across India and 38 Indian Cultural Centres abroad. Here in Hungary, the Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Centre has been at the forefront of these efforts. Since its establishment, it has worked consistently to promote awareness and appreciation of India's cultural heritage through a variety of events and activities.

Our mission here is greatly aided by the special cultural connect between India and Hungary. The warm bilateral ties shared by our two nations are deeply rooted in a history of mutual respect, intellectual exchange, and a genuine appreciation for each other's artistic and cultural traditions.

ICCR's scholarship and fellowship programs, along with its cultural exchanges, have provided numerous individuals with opportunities to experience India's culture, language, arts, and traditions firsthand. I am particularly happy to acknowledge that many Hungarian citizens have benefited from ICCR scholarships over the years and continue to act as goodwill ambassadors of Indian culture in Hungary.

To our esteemed ICCR Alumni present today: you are the vital bridges between our two cultures. Having lived and breathed the Indian experience, you carry a special responsibility. You are uniquely positioned to represent the depth and authenticity of Indian culture to Hungary, and to deepen the understanding of India within the Hungarian people.

On this special occasion, we express our sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to ICCR's journey — past and present members, artists, scholars, alumni, diplomats, and cultural enthusiasts — whose dedication has strengthened the cause of cultural diplomacy. I would also like to thank the ICCR alumni who will be performing today and sharing their experiences. I am confident that their contributions will add great value to this celebration.

As we mark the 77th Foundation Day of ICCR, we celebrate its remarkable achievements and look ahead with optimism to further strengthening cultural exchange, collaboration, and mutual understanding.

Thank you all for joining us today. We deeply value your continued support in the future endeavours of the Cultural Centre.

Thank you.