

**SPEECH BY H'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
AT THE STATE BANQUET HOSTED BY HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF
SWEDEN**

Your Majesties,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank Your Majesty for your gracious words. It is indeed a privilege to make this first ever State Visit by a President of India to Sweden. I deeply appreciate the splendid welcome and the gracious hospitality accorded to me and to my delegation.

2. Your Majesty, India attaches great importance to its long standing friendship with Sweden. Though our two nations are geographically distant from each other, we are bound by our common commitment to democratic values and practice. We are both open, pluralistic societies that are committed to the protection of human rights and the Rule of Law. We have, over the years, developed mutual trust and goodwill that has brought our people together to achieve our common goals in many sectors. Our bilateral relations have never been better and our people share a desire to see the enhancement of our co-operation to its full potential.

3. Your Majesty, our countries have similar views on many issues of regional and global concern. We have been co-operating closely in the United Nations and other multilateral fora - where India appreciates the support that we have received and continue to receive from Sweden. We are grateful for your endorsement of India's rightful claim to Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council and for your proactive efforts that helped India achieve Observer status in the Arctic Council during the period of Sweden's Chairmanship.

4. Your Majesty, you made a State Visit to India in 1993 and subsequently in 2005 on the Royal Technology Mission. It has been a decade since then - and over these years, I am happy to say, India has seen dramatic progress in many sectors. The new Government in India has taken a number of initiatives to encourage investments, boost the manufacturing sector in India, promote skill development, develop smart cities and engage closely with all interested partners and investors - both in India and abroad - to realise these objectives.

5. I am confident that the bilateral agreements that we have signed during my visit will lead to further fruitful engagement in the many fields where India and Sweden have obvious complementarities.

6. It was just over a hundred years ago that our great philosopher and poet, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, received the Nobel Prize for

Literature in 1913. He was not only the first Indian, but in fact, the first non-European to be a Nobel Laureate in literature. This was only possible due to the great interest shown by the Swedish Society in the literary works of Tagore as early as 1911.

7. Prince William of Sörmland visited Kolkata around the same time and wrote about his experiences in Kolkata and the Tagore family in his book entitled "Där solen lyser" (There the sun shines).

8. Gurudev Tagore visited Sweden in 1921 and 1926. These were probably the first recorded visits of an eminent Indian dignitary to Sweden. He was greeted, among others, by His Majesty the King Gustav V.

9. I am honoured to continue the tradition and would like to invite Your Majesties to visit India again - at a time of your convenience. It would be a great pleasure and privilege to receive you in New Delhi.

10. In conclusion, I would like to recall the apt words of Ms. Selma Lagerlof, the first ever women Nobel Laureate in literature, who was a contemporary of Gurudev Tagore and I quote: "*No one is able to enjoy such feast than the one who throws a party in his own mind*". I would like to congratulate the people of Sweden for their creativity and their ingenious innovations and thank them for giving to the world some of the most important and life-changing inventions.

11. I take this opportunity to convey the best wishes of the Government and the people of India to the people of Sweden as you celebrate your National Day on the 6th of June.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to please join me in raising a toast:

- To the health of Their Majesties, the King and Queen of Sweden
- To the continued progress and prosperity of the people of Sweden and India
- To the enduring friendly relations between India and Sweden.

Skål !

Thank you.
