

Indian Council for Cultural Relations

President's Message on the 70th Foundation Day

9th April 2020

Indian Council for Cultural Relations is celebrating its 70th Foundation Day today. This is the day, first and foremost to pay our tributes to all our founding fathers and express our deep gratitude towards all who provided leadership and worked untiringly to cultivate this unique institution during the last seven decades. It is thanks to their contribution that ICCR today has earned a place of prominence in global community.

Today, when the entire world recognises the importance of soft power, the role of ICCR becomes all the more critical. During the last seven decades, through thousands of international students who were supported by the ICCR through scholarships and fellowships to study in India, we have been able to create a large pool of goodwill for our great nation. We have also successfully conducted various cultural exchange tours taking Indian traditional art to important centres all over the world. Our academic seminars and conferences also have helped evolve a better understanding of Indic knowledge systems including Sanskrit language, all over the world.

However, when it comes to cultural relations of India, the more you do, the more you realise how little you do has been our experience. This is because the essence of the concept of soft power in the context of India is about the idea of India. Centuries before, the

World rushed to discover India because of its spices, which is again an ingredient of our soft power. However in the modern context, if soft power is about occupying mind space and influencing thought processes, we still have miles to go. And never in the past was relevance of Indian philosophy felt so very acutely than today, when world population is facing the challenge of pandemic. Locked down in the four walls of our habitats, with insecurity due to uncertainty gripping popular minds, the only message that may soothe and reassure Humanity is Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, or the entire world is one Family.

Let's therefore rededicate ourselves to the task of evolving an enlightened understanding of the idea of India and thereby make a significant contribution to India's soft power. Let's not forget that essential oneness of Human beings is India's message and integrating hearts and minds for universal fraternity is our cherished goal.

Vinay Sahasrabuddhe