

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED
INDOLOGIST AWARD-2017**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, 27 November, 2017

I extend a warm welcome to all of you at the Distinguished Indologist Award Ceremony. It is indeed a privilege for me to address this august gathering of eminent scholars and personalities.

2. A few centuries ago, people from different walks of life came together to delve deep into India's ancient past. And so, Indology was born. Scholars the world over have continued to study this academic tradition to understand Indian civilisation and its ancient heritage. The Distinguished Indologist Award is a befitting recognition of all scholarly works, past and present, to discover the deeper essence of Indian thought and expression. I compliment the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for this initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. I am delighted to have conferred the third Distinguished Indologist Award on Professor Hiroshi Marui of Japan. That I did so with Lord Buddha blessing us from behind makes it even more special. Professor Hiroshi Marui has spent over forty years working on Indian philosophy and Buddhist Studies. His many acclaimed publications and research papers are considered final authority on several subjects the world over. As the President of Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies, he has made significant contribution to propagate Indology amongst the youth in Japan. I congratulate him for receiving this prestigious award and compliment him for his exemplary contribution to Indology.

4. It is a matter of great satisfaction for us that the third Distinguished Indology Award has been conferred on a scholar from Japan, a country with which we have had cross-flow of ideas, art, literature and religious

philosophy for ages. These have led to deep spiritual affinity and cultural understanding between the two peoples.

5. We have illuminating accounts of Japanese scholars, Kibi-no-Makibi and Kōbō Daishi, who are credited for evolving the *kana* syllabary having studied Sanskrit from Indian scholars. This could have led to similarities that we see between Devanagari and Japanese syllabary. There are other similarities to be noted too; the sentence in Japanese language is arranged in the same order as in Sanskrit – subject (*karta*), followed by object (*karm*), and then the verb (*kriya*). This cultural intermingling impacted us as well. With Okakura Tenshin and his association with Swami Vivekananda and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, a new chapter unfolded in Indo-Japanese understanding. Japan's success in modernising itself while keeping its traditional values intact had deeply impressed both.

6. Today, India-Japan relations have acquired a higher salience. As such, Indology and the works of Professor Hiroshi Marui have become even more meaningful.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Indology is the study of India, its multi-faceted and ancient culture and civilization. It is fascinating how the cross-currents of time in the 17th and 18th century led to deep interest among Western scholars to study Sanskrit and ancient Indian texts. Universities in Europe and Orientalists in India sought solace in Upanishadic thought and admired the literary sophistication of Shakuntalam. Monier Williams and others saw in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata the clue to the Indian mind and ethos. Max Muller, the great Indologist, said and I quote: *“If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India”*.

8. Spiritual leaders and social reformers, from Swami Vivekanand to Raja Rammohan Roy, went deep into the writings of Indologists and reminded Indians of their ancient heritage. The Indologists brought about a new consciousness in India that ignited self pride. They became a

bridge between India and the western world. This also encouraged many Indian scholars to take up Indology.

9. Indian culture and its many attributes have evolved over centuries. The depth of time has given it a unique strength and character. It is integral and holistic, synthetic and accommodating. Hence, it could survive the onslaughts of time and transcend the limits of space. Indian-ness is characterized by inclusive pluralism; it is rooted in the principle of *DHARMO RAKSHATI RAKSHITAH* that is - Dharma or the virtuous order, which when protected, protects all without exclusion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Today, we all live as a global community. There is greater need for mutual understanding. New ideas are shaping our daily lives. People and policy makers are looking for options to make living more sustainable, one where we have a symbiotic relationship with nature and ecology around us. We are digging deep into our traditional knowledge and ancient wisdom to share with the humankind the best of our achievements. India is doing its best to propagate the virtues of Yoga and Ayurveda for the well-being of humanity. Likewise, other nations and societies are making efforts to revive their traditional cultural expressions. In such a scenario, Indology assumes greater significance to promote better undertaking between peoples and to share what India has to offer to humankind.

11. Indologists over generations have helped in a deeper understanding of India's history and civilisation. We are truly grateful to Professor Hiroshi Marui for his contribution to Indology. I am confident that such endeavours will lead to a greater interest in not only study and research of classical Indology but also study of India in all its aspects.

12. With these words, I would like to once again congratulate Professor Hiroshi Marui. I wish him all success in his future endeavours.

Origato, Professor Marui.

Thank you.

JAI HIND.

