

**INDIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA INC**  
**SPEECH BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**HOBART CITY HALL, SUNDAY 15 AUGUST 2021**

Thank you very much Ajit Ramadas and all your colleagues for inviting me as Governor to make a speech to mark and celebrate the Republic of India's 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, and this India Culture Day.

May I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land— the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and who continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

I acknowledge among us:

- the Honourable Elise Archer MP, Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts
- Councillor Anna Reynolds, Lord Mayor of Hobart
- The Honourable Meg Webb MLC
- The Honourable Joshua Willie MLC
- Ms Kristie Johnston MP
- other dignitaries
- and together with Ajit Ramadas, President, and Satendra Bohla, Secretary, of the Indian Cultural Society of Tasmania, and the other Committee Members present

It was on this day, exactly 75 years ago that India achieved her Independence: the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947. I doubt that there are many here old enough to recall that day. But it was a momentous day in modern world history. There was keen interest in India's new beginning here in Australia, having been part of the then British Empire.

May I quote from Hobart's *Mercury* newspaper on India's Independence. Under a large headline, "The End of an Era", its editorial declared:

Two centuries of British rule in India come to an end today with the assumption of full powers by the successor Dominions, India and Pakistan. For the Indian peoples, Hindu and Moslem alike, the transfer of authority marks the close of a long and often bitter struggle for freedom.

Predictions that the division of India would be accompanied by unprecedented bloodshed and strife have not been fulfilled ... Communal differences possibly remain latent, and it would be foolishly optimistic to claim that they have been removed by the drastic expedient of political surgery. But the change-over from British rule to Indian has taken place, not only with surprising speed, once the die was cast, but with extraordinarily little friction.

... Strong winds which have blown across India in recent years will bring in their wake a tremendous social, political, and economic upheaval. A new vitality and more liberal spirit will be necessary if the Indian people are to build the India of their dreams.<sup>1</sup>

Both India and Pakistan remained as members in the reconstituted Commonwealth. Today, India is a major influence in this now 54-member Commonwealth of Nations. Not only that, India is by far the world's most populous democracy and a stable democracy in our uncertain world.

Australia and our island state of Tasmania are proud to have citizens and residents with strong ties to India. Our Indian Cultural Society of Tasmania, and our wider umbrella body, the Multicultural Council of Tasmania, have worked hard and with great energy in our State, working to ensure "a harmonious Tasmania that is just, fair and inclusive."<sup>2</sup>

May I note that the objective of the Indian Cultural Society of Tasmania – founded in Hobart in 1972 was and remains to stimulate and foster interest and appreciation of Indian culture, as part of the cultural heritage of the world. This can be done through exhibitions, displays, lectures, seminars and performances in fields such as dance, music, films, culinary arts, arts and crafts, and the celebration of Indian traditional festivals.<sup>3</sup> We all love India's great export, its food, spicy curries, dahl, tandoori, naan bread and more!

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<sup>1</sup> The Mercury, Friday 15 August 2021 page 3.

<sup>2</sup> <https://mcot.org.au/>, accessed 12 August 2021.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.icstas.org.au/about-us.php>, accessed 12 August 2021.

India is the largest producer of films in the world and the second oldest film industry in the world.<sup>4</sup> It is the birthplace of many great authors. One of my favourite novels is Salmon Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. The narrator, Saleem Sinai, born at the exact moments when India gained independence, discovers that all children born between 12 am and 1 am on that day are imbued with special powers. Of relevance, the novel portrays India's transition from British colonial rule to independence.

Your cultural objectives also just as importantly reach out into the areas: educational; benevolent; charitable; and sporting activities.

Having a keen personal interest in sport, we all know there is nothing quite like a test match these days between Australia and India. However, in the interests of ongoing harmony, I'd best not go into details about the home test series played in Australia last summer! But we all know for the record that India won 2-1 thanks to a famous batting stand in the 4<sup>th</sup> innings – Shubman Gill 91, Rishabh Pant 89 not out, player of the match.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our Lord Mayor and our City of Hobart for supporting this event through a Community Grant program.

Congratulations to the Society for marking India's 75<sup>th</sup> Independence, and my very best wishes to all for a wonderful day of friendship and enjoyment.

Thank you.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film\\_industry#India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_industry#India)