

**INDIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA
CELEBRATION TO MARK THE 77TH INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOBART TOWN HALL, SUNDAY 20 AUGUST 2023**

Thank you, Kiran / Mrs Yellapu.

Good morning to you all. I am very pleased to be with you to mark India's 77th Independence Day.

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 and recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea and waters.

Each year, the day of the 15th August, is the occasion to celebrate India's Day of Independence. This day marks the end of a very long period of British domination, including direct rule from 1858, as the British Raj.

We, of course, have our own significant date in that decade. January 1856 saw the inauguration of the self-governing Colony of Tasmania together with removal of the old name, Van Diemen's Land.

At the national level, Australia and India had close formal ties a few years prior to Independence in 1947. In November 1944, India's first High Commissioner to Australia took up residence in Canberra.

He was Sir Raghunath Paranjpye, described as "one of the best-known figures in Indian social, political, and educational movements."¹ Sir Raghunath was "a graduate of Cambridge University, brilliant mathematician, keen rationalist, and author of four books on rationalism."²

¹ *The Mercury*, Thursday 25 May 1944, page 3.

² *The Mercury*, Friday 17 November 1944, page 6.

Interestingly, his daughter Shakuntala, accompanied him to Canberra, and she too was a Cambridge graduate, a noted Indian film star and a playwright.³

There was a clear and strong desire to accord high status to our diplomatic relations. So, on Friday 15th August 1947, to mark India's Independence Day, Sir Raghunath raised the new Dominion Flag at a formal ceremony at his Canberra High Commission residence. Later, Australian Cabinet Ministers and members of the diplomatic corps were entertained at a dinner at the residence.⁴

Our close and warm ties remain. In Tasmania, they are expressed through official visits by Indian High Commissioners. Looking back through our Government House files we can see that these visits are possibly the most regular of High Commissioner or Ambassador visits to Tasmania.

Since the turn of this century, Tasmanian Governors have hosted official Indian High Commissioner visits, of two or three days, on no less than six occasions, most recently in 2018. We have also hosted numerous day visits by Indian Consuls-General.

It was planned for the current High Commissioner for India to visit in June 2023. His Excellency Mr Manpreet Vohra, and Mrs Naseem Vohra, had to postpone; we look forward to hosting them in due course.

In closing, may I thank the Indian Cultural Society of Tasmania for hosting this event. I also thank you for ensuring that our social relations remain close through the numerous events held at Government House for ICST members and friends.

As Governor of Tasmania, I congratulate all the people of India in Tasmania, and elsewhere, on this auspicious occasion marking the Republic of India's 77th Independence Day.

Thank you.

³ *The Examiner* Tuesday 5 April 1938, page 8.

⁴ *The Mercury*, Saturday 16 August 1947, page 4.