

EMBASSY OF INDIA
BEIJING

**COMMEMORATION OF 157TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY
OF SHRI RABINDRANATH TAGORE**
(Saturday, 19th May 2018)

SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR

Prof. Dong Youchen,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend a very warm welcome to all of you today at this commemoration of the 157th Birth Anniversary of India's Poet Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. Gurudev, as he was fondly called, was a prolific writer, who wrote in almost all literary genres, including poems, plays, novels, essays as well as short stories. He was also an excellent painter, music composer and director of plays and dramas. It was in recognition of his multi-faceted talent that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in November 1913, specifically in recognition of his world famous collection of poems "Gitanjali".

2. Rabindranath Tagore was fascinated by China and its ancient civilization and was one of the earliest modern thinkers of India who understood and comprehended the benefits of mutual understanding and cooperative partnership between India and China, the two great civilizations of Asia. Tagore visited China twice, first in 1924 and then again in 1929. The first visit is described, both in China as well as in India, as a major event in the literary circles of the two countries. This visit to China left a very strong impression on Rabindranath Tagore, and he made friendships here, especially with the young Chinese Poet Xu Zhimo, who was his official translator during the trip.

3. Upon his return to India, he established the world famous Cheena Bhawan at Shantiniketan with the idea that it would be a bridge for intellectual exchanges between our two countries. He appointed Professor Tan Yunshan as the first Director of Cheena Bhawan, who in turn did yeoman service for closer understanding between India and China.

4. Today, especially after the Wuhan Summit between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping, where our two leaders had several hours of heart-to-heart discussions, especially on strategic and over-arching issues, there is a much greater comprehension of each other amongst the leadership of our countries. I believe that our job at events like this one today is to expand friendship and understanding between the people of India and China. Therefore, I am particularly happy that we have an eminent personality such as Professor Dong Youchen to speak to us today about Rabindranath Tagore, his life and times as well as his understanding and friendship with people in China. Through our efforts to remember Tagore, we are doing our little bit for enhancing understanding and trust between our people. This will stand both our countries in good stead and will contribute in making the 21st Century an Asian Century.

5. I thank you all for your attention. I am confident that today's programme will be a big success.