

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE FIRST TAGORE
AWARD ON CULTURAL HARMONY TO
LATE PANDIT RAVI SHANKAR**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi: 07-03-2013

1. I feel honoured to present the first Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony for the year 2012 to Late Pandit Ravi Shankar, the great Indian Sitar Maestro whose renditions had and will continue to enthrall the world.
2. Though Pandit Ravi Shankar is no more with us in his physical form, his music will always remain with us and remind us of the profound contributions he made towards internationalization of Indian classical music. I am glad that his wife, Shrimati Sukanya Shankar, and his daughter, Ms. Anoushka Shankar, are here today to accept the award.
3. As part of the commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, this award was instituted to promote values of universal brotherhood. In May 2012, in the closing ceremony of the Tagore commemoration, I had the privilege of announcing the name of Pandit Ravi Shankar as the recipient of the first Tagore Award.
4. Ladies and Gentlemen, Rabindranath Tagore was a literary icon who was fascinated by the idea of interaction between civilizations through the exchange of knowledge about their cultures and literatures. This versatile genius, being a poet, an author, a composer, a painter, a philosopher and an educationist, was the perfect ambassador of our country for cultural exchange with the world outside.
5. The literature, history and culture of different nations reflect the universal values of humanity. In a world still fettered by race, creed and colour, Rabindranath Tagore promoted internationalism for a new world order based on diversity,

open-mindedness, tolerance, and co-existence of many cultures.

6. This bard of India made the world his home. The Visva Bharati University, which he established in 1921, was set up on the ideal of "*Yatra Visvam Bhavati eka needam*" ("*where the world makes its home in a single nest*"). He visualized a cosmopolitan place of learning where students from different cultures would meet and learn from one another.
7. When Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1861, the collective consciousness of our people was afflicted by feelings of inferiority. By the year 1941 when he breathed his last, these ideas were no longer prevalent. Tagore was among the pioneers in bringing this sea change in attitude.
8. He preached the religion of Truth and Harmony, and of Love and Sympathy. As we celebrate the centenary of the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize, it is befitting that we confer the award instituted in his name to an equally loved son of India, Pandit Ravi Shankar.
9. Ladies and gentlemen, Late Pandit Ravi Shankar was India's most esteemed musical Ambassador and a singular phenomenon in the world of classical music. As a composer, performer, teacher and writer, he rendered invaluable service to Indian music and culture.
10. After years of dedicated training under his illustrious Guru, Baba Allaudin Khan, and establishing himself in the world of classical music in India, he embarked on a journey to the West to spread the beauty of Indian classical music. He is acclaimed for his pioneering work in bringing Indian classical music to the West and popularizing it.
11. He studied the Sitar for seven years, eighteen hours a day, and became a master of the instrument which was then unknown in most of the world. He collaborated with renowned international figures in music to bring the Sitar to a position of prominence in the global music arena.

12. He did the groundwork for other Indian musicians to follow, in performing Indian classical music across the world. The world is now permeated with the acceptance of Indian music, which is largely due to the vision of Pandit Ravi Shankar.
13. The Sitar in the hands of Pandit Ravi Shankar was more than a musical instrument. Drawing on our own traditions, he made music a universal language. He was foremost in reaching out to the young, making sure Hindustani classical music found a place in their hearts and lives.
14. It was Pandit Ravi Shankar who as a living legend deeply influenced many key Western artistes and musicians. He worked with artistes from different parts of the globe to bring before the world audience the idea of a composite culture as ancient as our land but as radiant as the 'ragas' he brought to life. His work with the great Yehudi Menuhin transcended faiths, regions and cultures.
15. He has been recognized widely for his contribution to music and for bringing cultural harmony through music. He was bestowed the Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1962, Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1992, France's highest civilian honour, the Knight of the Legion of Honour, besides a host of other important honours including Grammy Awards in his long and illustrious career. He was a recipient of the Bharat Ratna in 1999.
16. Pandit Ravi Shankar was a musical genius but he remained a humble human being throughout his life. In his Autobiography titled *Raga Mala*, he says and I quote:

"People ask me always what I want to be remembered by, and I would like it to be not for my mistakes, but for the things that I was able to achieve – those that have touched the hearts of the people in my own country and beyond. God has been kind to me and I have been very lucky indeed to have gained recognition and appreciation almost all over the world. It has

been my good fortune that there have never been any problems with communicating the greatness of our music”.

17. His passing away from our midst has been a great loss to India and the world. His legacy, however, lives on and will continue to illuminate the world of music. With the conferment of the first Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony, we pay a tribute to Late Pandit Ravi Shankar for his enormous contribution to cultural harmony.

Thank you.

JAI HIND.
